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A

MEMOIR

OF

ABNER W. CLOPTON, A.M.

Pastor of Baptist Churches in Charlotte County, Virginia.

BY JEREMIAH B. JETER.

RICHMOND, VA.:
PUBLISHED BY YALE & WYATT.

1837.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Page

Abner W. Clopton's birth—Parentage—Early dispositions and habits—Education—Religious instruction

Enters on business—Fondness for pleasure—Marriage, and divorce—Influence of this affliction—Commencement of his classical studies—Residence in South Carolina—Enters the North Carolina University—Appointed tutor—Freedom from temptation—Upright deportment—Graduates—Returns home—Studies medicine—Enters the Pennsylvania University—Conversion—Returns home—Joy of his father—Baptized 7

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Clopton appointed tutor in the North Carolina University—Practises medicine—Joins Ano Baptist church—Weekly prayer-meeting established—Interesting letter to his father—Exercised about entering the ministry—Increase of his religious zeal—Commences public labours for Christ—Great embarrassment in speaking—Erection of a house of worship—Thoughts of devoting himself wholly to the ministry—His views of communion—Connexion with the Orange Presbytery—Extracts from his correspondence 35

CHAPTER III.

Page

Mr. Clopton leaves Chapel Hill—Settles in Milton, North Carolina—Reasons for doing so—Labours in the vicinity—Sickness—Willingness to devote himself entirely to the ministry—Affection for his pupils—Interesting letter to a pupil—Incident—Letter on affliction 69

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Clopton's pastoral labours in Charlotte—Interesting period of his life—Condition of the churches—Mr. Clopton invited to settle among them—Accepts the invitation—Difficulties to encounter—Extracts from his journal—His discipline—Preaching—Private instructions—Several conversions resulting from his conversations—Visits—Incautious reproofs—Means of which he availed himself to promote religion among his churches—Successes—Remarks 84

CHAPTER V.

An account of Elder Clopton's labours in the Appomattox Association, and in other parts of the state—His first appearance at the association—Its condition—Writes two circulars for it—Extract from that on "Church Discipline"—From that on "Ministerial Ordination"—Deportment in the body—Effect of his preaching at Powhattan court house—In Spottsylvania—Account of camp meeting—His correspondence 117

CHAPTER VI.

Page

Containing an account of Mr. Clopton's efforts for the suppression of Campbellism—His zeal for the truth —Mr. Campbell's introduction to eastern Virginia —Gradual developement of his system—Elder Clopton opposes it from the pulpit and the press— Extracts from his "Review of Campbellism"— Distinguishing sentiments of Mr. Campbell—Remarks 146

CHAPTER VII.

Elder Clopton's efforts in the temperance reform— Causes of his abandoning the use of spirits—Annual temperance society formed — Mr. Clopton conceives the plan of the Virginia Temperance Society—Society formed at Ash Camp—Extract from circular address—From Mr. Clopton's journal—Great excitement produced—Mr. Clopton's constant efforts—Character of his temperance addresses—Anniversary meetings of society—Success of society—Tribute to Mr. Clopton's memory 171

CHAPTER VIII.

Contains an account of Mr. Clopton's labours in behalf of the Columbian College—Early efforts of Virginia Baptists in the cause of education—Account of Columbian College—Its embarrassment— Elder Clopton accepts an agency to Georgia—His labours and successes, in extracts from several letters, and his journal—Returns to Georgia on the agency—Severe conflicts—Extracts from his journal—Incident—Memoir—Appointed general agent —Enters on the duties of the office—Arrested by death—Resolution of board of trustees . . . 193

CHAPTER IX.

Page

Elder Clopton ripening for heaven—Interesting letter—Attacked with disease—Letter to his father—Death—Interment—Resolutions passed by a convention of his churches—Funeral—Resolution of the Georgia Baptist convention—Epitaph—Personal appearance 224

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Clopton's character—Temper—Good son—Affection to kindred—Sincere friend—Upright citizen—Eminent Christian—Humility—Contrition—Meekness—Disinterestedness—Independence—Piety—Sympathizing letter—Eccentricities—Imperfections—Habits—Abilities as a writer; as a preacher—Doctrinal views 243

Concluding reflections 271

MEMOIR

OF

ABNER W. CLOPTON.

CHAPTER I.

A. W. Clopton's birth—Parentage—Early dispositions and habits—Education—Religious instruction—Enters on business—Fondness for pleasure—Marriage, and divorce—Influence of this affliction—Commencement of his classical studies—Residence in South Carolina—Enters the North Carolina University—Appointed tutor—Freedom from temptation—Upright deportment—Graduates—Returns home—Studies medicine—Enters the Pennsylvania University—Conversion—Returns home—Joy of his father—Baptized.

Abner Wentworth Clopton, the subject of the following memoir, was born March the 24th, 1784, in Pittsylvania county, Virginia. His father, Mr. Robert Clopton, a plain, industrious, and thrifty planter, has been for many years a pious, leading, and useful member of Shockoe Baptist church. He is now, at the patriarchal age of fourscore

years, in the enjoyment of vigorous health, the reward of sober and uniform habits. The maiden name of his aged and esteemed consort was Frances Anderson. She gave birth to ten children, six of whom are still living. Her second child was Abner, who proved to be, as his name signifies, the "lamp of his father."

Abner was distinguished, even in childhood, for an amiable and winning disposition. To the commands of his parents, he yielded a scrupulous and cheerful obedience. He early acquired the power of governing a temper naturally irritable. And even in the usual season of mirth and waywardness, he gave promise of the sedateness and stability which distinguished his mature years.

Mr. Clopton, possessing but a small estate, and knowing the dangerous tendency of idleness, compelled his son, while quite young, to assist in the ordinary labours of his farm. In these healthful employments, he began to form those habits of diligence and perseverance, which greatly contributed to his future usefulness and elevation. Parents and guardians would do well to receive instruc-

tion from this judicious example. To expect a life of enterprise and usefulness to succeed childhood and youth, wasted in sloth, is about as wise as to expect a spontaneous harvest in the barren desert.

Abner was not long employed in manual labour, but was sent, in succession, to several common schools, in the neighbourhood of his father's residence. Of the character of these schools, in which he was taught the rudiments of learning, nothing is known. The system of instruction, generally adopted at this period, in this section of country, was deplorably imperfect. Whatever were the disadvantages under which young Clopton prosecuted his studies, his proficiency was highly gratifying to his friends. While attending one of these schools, he received, accidentally, from one of his playmates, a severe wound over his lungs, from which he suffered much; and from the effects of which, he did not, perhaps, entirely recover during life.

It was the good fortune of the subject of this memoir, to be, during his juvenile years, under the constant superintendence of a fa-

ther, who felt his solemn responsibility to "bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and who laboured intelligently to discharge this obligation. The mind of young Clopton was early imbued with the principles of the gospel of Christ. The interests of his soul, in all their magnitude, were placed before him. From evil society, which exerts so baneful an influence over untutored minds, he was carefully preserved. His sabbaths were usually spent in the house of God, where he had an opportunity of hearing the word of salvation published, defended, explained, and enforced, with the peculiar advantages which the pulpit affords. Mr. Clopton maintained family religion. Young Abner was taught to bow, morning and evening, before the Giver of every good and of every perfect gift, to render thanks for his mercies, to adore his majesty, to deprecate his wrath, and to implore his guidance and protection. To omit nothing by which his son might be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, Mr. Clopton conversed with him frequently and affectionately on his immortal interests. Often

did the godly man retire with his beloved child to the secret closet, or lonely grove, and pour forth his fervent supplication to his Father in heaven, to enlighten and sanctify the object of his pious solicitude. After the young man was called to leave the paternal home, and enter on the dangerous experiment of self-government, amid the temptations and corruptions of the world, he frequently received letters breathing a father's pious concern for his salvation, and fraught with instructions, warnings, and entreaties. We have reason to believe, that Mr. Clopton's direct efforts for the salvation of his son, were seconded by the persuasive eloquence of a blameless and godly life; without which instructions are inefficient, and prayers are solemn mockery. It was in this period of A. W. Clopton's life, that impressions were made upon his heart by Divine truth, which, after many years, resulted in his conversion to God.

The time had now arrived for young Clopton to enter into business. When about sixteen years old, he was placed, as a clerk, in a country store, in the neighbourhood of his

father's. He continued in this employment four years; and by strict attention to business, and an amiable, obliging disposition, gained the confidence and esteem of his employer. His early religious education, and a regard for the feelings of his venerated parent, preserved him, during this period, from profanity and dissipation, which but too commonly prevailed, in all classes of society, around him. But nothing more can be said in his commendation. "God was not in all his thoughts." He resigned himself, without resistance, to the strong current of worldliness, upon the surface of which he had been thrown; and was borne forward, with fearful rapidity, toward perdition. He took great delight in the fashionable amusements of the day. On these, some serious and worthy persons look with forbearance, if not with positive toleration. We are not the advocates of a needless austerity; but we should not forget the authority by which it is affirmed, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Christianity is a religion of self-denial, mortification, and godly sorrow. Relaxation is necessary, alike, for the

health of the body, and the vigour of the mind. Amusements intended *merely* for recreation, and in accordance with our obligations as social, civil, and immortal beings, are *innocent;* but this cannot be said of those by which the young and gay are so much captivated. These were not invented by the friends of God: they are never pursued for the glory of God; demand a wicked waste of time; fatigue the body; unfit the mind for reflection and prayer; benumb the conscience; prepare the heart for a course of licentiousness; and are wholly unworthy of rational, responsible, and immortal beings on their passage to the judgment seat.

We have now reached a fact in the life of Clopton, over which we would gladly draw a veil, did not historic fidelity forbid it. In the autumn of 1803, he formed an unfortunate matrimonial alliance. Shortly after its consummation, he became convinced that its continuance would destroy his happiness and respectability; and believing that the law of God sanctioned its dissolution, he obtained from the Virginia legislature, in the session of 1809–10, a divorce. None of his

friends censured his conduct on this trying and painful occasion. He acted with the firmness of purpose for which he was ever remarkable.

It is due to the unfortunate Mrs. Clopton to state, that, it is believed, by persons intimately acquainted with her, that her sincere and deep repentance, and circumspect deportment, for more than thirty years, have, in a measure, atoned for her youthful imprudence. Here we might stop to raise our indignant voice against the fiendlike crime of seduction, which, perpetrated with smiles, fair speeches, and caresses, betrays its unsuspecting victim to infamy and wo; but we forbear to dwell on a subject so melancholy in itself, and so painful to some who may read this memoir.

To this event, though extremely mortifying, A. W. Clopton was greatly indebted for his usefulness. It changed entirely the current of his life. He would probably have spent his days in the toils of a farm, or in mercantile pursuits, had not the dreams of wealth and distinction, in which his ardent and untutored imagination had been indulging,

been thus dispelled. He now became convinced that learning is the path to usefulness and distinction. Instantly he determined to make any sacrifice to obtain it. We shall follow him through several years, struggling, with invincible perseverance, against various obstacles, but turning neither to the right nor the left, until he is a graduate of the North Carolina University, at Chapel Hill.

Clopton commenced his classical studies early in 1804, at Banister academy, in his native county. He did not long remain here; but removed, in the following spring or summer, to a private classical school, in Guilford county, North Carolina, where he remained until the summer of 1806. His teacher, Mr. Caldwell, bore flattering testimony to his diligence in study, proficiency in learning, and sober, discreet, and amiable behaviour during this period.

Having now exhausted his money, and being cast mainly on his own exertions for the means of prosecuting his studies, he travelled into Williamsburg district, South Carolina, and engaged in teaching a small private school. The following extract is

from a letter, written from this place, to his brother-in-law, dated Nov. 23, 1806. It is given as one of the earliest specimens of his epistolary talent—a talent in which he subsequently excelled. It furnishes, incidentally, evidence of his strict deportment, and scriptural views of the important subject of regeneration.

"I attended a sacrament on Sunday last, and was much surprised at the number of communicants; indeed, there were very few who did not partake of the bread and wine. Being almost, without exception, bred to the —— profession, they think the piety of their parents, and their own negative good works, entitle them to a participation of this holy ordinance; and, at the same time, (there are, I hope, some exceptions to this general remark,) are as ignorant of regeneration as he who is now dictating these sentiments. My morality is too slender for them, although I am as much on my guard as possible."

Clopton continued a year in the laborious and responsible employment of instructer, and then returned, with the reward of his industry, to his paternal home in Pittsylvania.

He spent several months in visiting his relations, reviewing his studies, and making preparations to enter the university.

In January, 1808, he entered the North Carolina University, at Chapel Hill. On examination, he was found to be deficient in the studies of a whole session, but was permitted to join the junior class, on promising to be prepared for the public examination. By close application to his studies, day and night, he redeemed this pledge, to the entire satisfaction of the Faculty.

Shortly after Clopton went to Chapel Hill, he was invited by the president of the university, Dr. Caldwell, to become his roommate. This unexpected invitation was accepted with great pleasure. Clopton enjoyed, in the unreserved and instructive conversation of the learned professor, decided advantages over his fellow students; so that his time passed pleasantly, and his studies were greatly facilitated.

In 1809, Clopton's means of pursuing his studies having been once more exhausted, he was induced to become a candidate for a vacant tutorship, in the institution. Receiv-

ing the appointment, he entered, in July, on the discharge of its duties. He was required to spend two hours a day in instruction, for which he was paid a yearly salary of $360. By close attention to his studies, he was able to keep pace with his class. Of the manner in which he performed the duties of this station, no information has been obtained; but it may be safely inferred, from the appointment which he subsequently received in the institution, that he gave satisfaction to the board of trustees.

It is to be deplored, that a residence in our public seminaries should subject young men to many dangerous, and often fatal, temptations. In these institutions, great numbers of youth are usually assembled, from different and distant parts. Inexperienced, heedless, and freed from parental restraints, they are an easy prey to seduction. Among them, some are sure to be idle, profane, licentious, and daring. These, by their exploits in vice, acquire a distinction, which, though really unenviable, diffuses among their companions a pernicious emulation. Corrupt sentiments are propagated, and ingeniously

defended; impure books are circulated and read; and the means of unlawful indulgences are multiplied, and cheaply and readily furnished. The process of corruption advances with fearful rapidity. Modesty is succeeded by arrogance; chastity yields to lewdness; profanity banishes seriousness; and blind skepticism converts into rank putrefaction the whole moral man. These evils may be checked, or diminished, but cannot be wholly prevented by a rigorous and vigilant faculty. How many sons, the centre of a thousand fond expectations, sent to college conscientious and amiable, have returned, after a few years, *advanced* indeed in learning, but *accomplished* in every vice, a grief and reproach to their parents, and instructive monuments of the dangers which surround the path of collegiate learning! Fortunately for Clopton, he did not enter the University until he had reached the age of self-government and discretion. Trained to the practice of virtue, fortified by early religious instruction, and apprized of the dangers to which he would be exposed, he was not likely to become the victim of dissipation. Indeed, the university

appears to have been at this time unusually free from immorality. Located in a small village, far from the luxury and dissipation which abound in our populous cities, and containing, comparatively, few students, if it did not present facilities for the acquirement of learning equal to those of older and more renowned institutions, it was, at least, surrounded with fewer allurements to vice.

In a letter to his father, penned shortly after his entering the university, Abner says, "I am better pleased, in every respect, than I expected to be. I labour under no inconvenience as to evil company: my room-mates are quite moral, except one. I see no enticements to vice, and pray God I may escape temptations of every kind." An intelligent class-mate, and intimate acquaintance of young Clopton, in a letter to the compiler, bears the most decided testimony to his correct deportment, while pursuing his studies in Chapel Hill. "He was," says he, "grave for his age. (He had been, I heard, very unfortunate.) He did not mingle in our sports; and was, I know, exempt from the profanity, which was, unfortunately, but too

common in Chapel Hill; and, indeed, in general society, at that day."

The following extract of a communication, written to his younger brother, then a student in Hampden Sydney College, Virginia, containing an incidental and modest allusion to his own conduct while in the university, is fraught with sentiments so pure, and counsels so judicious, and breathes a spirit at once so affectionate and pious, as to merit an attentive perusal.

"DEAR BROTHER J.,—While I have the privilege of writing, I wish to remind you of the high responsibility of your present station. Undeviating honour you owe, and I hope you will not fail to render, to your teachers. God, who has inseparably connected duty and real advantage, requires this. And that you may not be tempted to deviate from the path of duty, seek, for your constant companions, those who 'fear God, and work righteousness.' The 'sweet singer of Israel' says, (Psalm i.) 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth

in the seat of the scornful.' You very well know whose morals were ruined, by forming habits of intimacy with ungodly and unprincipled companions. And I assure you, my dear brother, that highly as I value the advantages of a liberal education, I should prefer your being at home, among servants as your companions, to being with collegiate profligates, who blaspheme the name of God; whose throats are an open sepulchre; under whose lips is the poison of asps; and whose end, of course, without a display of sovereign grace, must be eternal destruction.

"You have hitherto supported the character of one who regards truth. Beware, then, of the fatal example of those, if such there be, who neglect their collegiate duties, and then doubly enhance their guilt, by downright falsehood, or (which is equally offensive in the sight of God, and of all good men,) by mean equivocation. God is a God of truth, and he requires truth in the inward parts, and has awfully, though graciously, told us, 'That all liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.'

'Far be it from me to boast of my own

deeds as meritorious; for, in all things I have come short of duty: but I may mention, for your encouragement, that I was a student at the university two sessions before I was appointed tutor; and, during that period, I was never called up to answer to the monitor's bill but once, and that was a case of necessity. Strive then, my brother, to be regular in all things: as well in attending public worship, as your recitations. And, in conclusion, let me exhort you to 'remember your Creator in the days of your youth:' work (that is, pray,) while it is called to-day. Though our parents are now well stricken in years, you may be called away first.

"May God Almighty bless you, and give you grace in Christ our Lord. Your affectionate brother, "A. W. C."

From the best information which we can obtain, it appears that Mr. Clopton graduated in 1810. He subsequently, we know not at what period, received the degree of master of arts. Of his literary standing in the institution, nothing is known, except that it was respectable. His labours as tutor, perhaps,

prevented him from sharing its first honours. He was distinguished rather by the soundness of his judgment, than by the retentiveness of his memory, the brilliancy of his imagination, or the extent of his learning.

In the time of Mr. Clopton's residence at the university, an event occurred by which his life was greatly periled. While travelling to the city of Richmond, Virginia, in a single chair, his horse took fright, and but for God's preserving hand, his valuable life must have been terminated.

In the beginning of the year 1810, Mr. Clopton returned, with pleasure, to his paternal home, to mingle with the companions and friends of his youth. The time having now fully arrived for him to select an employment for life, he determined, after much reflection, to enter the profession of medicine, either as being most congenial to his taste, or opening the fairest prospect of success. He was employed, during the year, in studies, preparatory to entering the University of Pennsylvania, then distinguished for the ability of its medical lectures. In the family of Dr. Rice, of Halifax, Virginia, under whose

instruction he studied, he sustained his reputation for amiableness, regularity, and diligence. Toward the close of the year, he repaired to Philadelphia, and joined the medical class in the university.

Let it not be inferred from any thing which has been stated that Mr. Clopton was at this time pious: he was very far from it. His father describes him as having now reached the summit of pride and vanity. His mind was dazzled, and his heart won by earthly splendour. The voice of conscience, by which he was much troubled in early life, had been gradually stifled, until its faint whispers were scarcely audible. Behind a decent and dignified exterior he concealed an utter alienation from God. The gifts were eagerly sought, and highly prized, but the Giver was ungerously excluded from grateful remembrance. The sweet hope, long indulged by a fond father, that his son would become a child of God—"an heir of bliss divine"—had been almost converted into the bitterness of despair. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways. His favours are often conferred when we least expect

them. "Surely," said the astonished patriarch, "God is in this place, and I knew it not." Who would have expected that Mr. Clopton, who had not been moved to repentance by the teachings, entreaties, prayers, and example of a godly and venerated parent, nor by all the public religious advantages which he had enjoyed, nor by all he had read in the volume of inspiration, should be converted at a time, when having thrown off all concern for eternity, his soul was absorbed in the pursuit of earthly knowledge and distinction? But so God graciously appointed.

While Mr. Clopton was pursuing his studies in the university, he was arrested by a disease which brought him suddenly to the verge of eternity. During his confinement, far from home and friends, he was led to serious reflection. In reviewing his life he was filled with shame and grief by the obligations which he had violated, the opportunities he had lost, and the mercies he had slighted. His heart was melted into sincere contrition. Perceiving in the light of revelation the infinite fulness, compassion and faithfulness, of Christ, he joyfully committed his soul to his

hands. Convinced of the justness of his claim to supremacy over all his works, he cheerfully consecrated his powers to his service and glory.

It is to be lamented that of Mr. Clopton's conversion so little information has been preserved. A full account of it from his own pen would no doubt have been very interesting and refreshing. From a few allusions to it, contained in his letters and journal, he appears to have been the subject of deep and painful experience. In a letter to his father, written several years after this event, he thus relates his conviction of sin: "When I was first arrested in my mad course to destruction, in Philadelphia, I concluded that because I had stood out so long against the calls, mercies, and judgments of God, there could be no hope for such a monster of iniquity." His journal, (under date of Jan. 1829,) contains a few incidental remarks on the same subject: "My conviction of sin was very deep previously to my profession of religion. My fears of death, judgment and hell, were then deep and solemn; and I seemed to have awful apprehensions of the purity and ma-

jesty of God." The following extract of a letter from a dear friend, displaying, no doubt, the exercises of his own heart, is but the filling up of the above outline. "If by the ministration of the holy, just, and good law of God, the sinner be convinced that he is already condemned; that the wrath of an omnipotent, as well as an infinitely just God, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, he then begins, as I take it, to labour, like such as are comprehended in the divine invitation, 'Come unto me all ye that that labour—and I will give you rest.' He labours to make an atonement for his sins by his own good deeds. At this he labours till he is wearied out; for in proportion to his earnestness, his burden increases: it is more intolerable than Egyptian bondage; not only is his task redoubled, but his strength is diminished; his knees become faint; he is bowed down. 'I was alive,' says Paul, 'without the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived, and I died.' When this avenger of blood pursues the convinced penitent till his strength is all exhausted: when

self is humbled: when God is permitted to sit on his throne as the only rightful sovereign, then, and not till then, is this invitation welcome. Then the perishing sinner needs help; the hungry food; the naked clothing; the blind sight; the deaf hearing. Then too he is not only willing to lend a listening ear to the invitations of the gospel; but, 'behold, he prayeth!' He mourns, and shall be comforted: he comes, and realizes the truth of his Lord's declaration: his burden is removed: he has rest from the dreadful terrors of the law—from the fear of death, of hell, and of judgment. And this rest is an earnest—an antepast—of that glorious and eternal rest which remains for the people of God. But why do I multiply words to teach you what you know better than I? You knew, no doubt, when you had no burden, and when you did not feel weary. You well recollect when the mountains of your sins pressed you almost to desperation. You know who it was that graciously reached out his omnipotent arm for your relief. You know too, who bare all our sins in his own body on the cross."

This imperfect sketch of Clopton's con-

version shall be closed with two or three remarks.

1. It was *genuine:* not a mere temporary excitement; but a thorough, permanent, moral change: a new birth, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever:"— a "new creation:"—a renewal of heart and mind. Divine truth appeared to him in a new, clear, and affecting light. Perceiving its infinite excellence he cordially embraced it, and was transformed by its influence. He, who had been proud, worldly, and secure, became humble, self-denying, and thoughtful. Through all the temptations and difficulties of his subsequent years, he was "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

2. *Affliction* was the means which God employed to bring him to a sense of his peril. While prosperity lasted he was unmindful of the source of all his benefits. He might justly have been left to slumber in delusion, until awakened by the torments of the second death; but God had selected him as an object of peculiar favour. Disease was commis-

sioned to lead him to reflection. Reflection convinced him of his folly, guilt, and danger. The religious impressions of early life, which had been almost obliterated by the action of worldly cares and pleasures, were deepened. Realizing his infinite need of salvation, he earnestly sought and obtained it. The sickness of his body terminated in the life, health, and beauty of his soul. He is not the only person who will have cause to praise God, eternally, for the rod of affliction. Thousands, who have been unmoved by the mercies, have been aroused and subdued by the judgments of God. "When thy judgments are in the earth, O Lord, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

3. His conversion furnishes another proof of the truth of Solomon's saying, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" Pious parents in aiming to train their children in the way of the Lord, may have to encounter appalling difficulties. Their kind, faithful, and fervent efforts for their salvation, may seem to have no other effect than to increase their aversion to divine truth. They may be

doomed to witness the modesty and promise of childhood exchanged for the waywardness and dissipation of youth. It may be their painful lot to see their offspring, tenderly and always beloved, increasing in skepticism and ungodliness, as they advance in years. But let them not despond or grow weary. While under their control let them teach, warn, entreat, and restrain them; whether under or beyond their control, let them not cease to importune, in their behalf, the Father of mercies, who only can "take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh." Their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Seed long buried in earth may vegetate. Truth once impressed on the heart will not likely be lost. They may for a time be forgotten, but some awakening providence, or the secret and powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, will recall them to mind, impress them on the conscience, and cause them to become the life of the soul.

In the spring of 1812, Mr. Clopton, having regained his health, returned to his father's. The change from cold, sterile winter, to balmy, verdant spring was not more visible and

cheering than that which had taken place in the spirit and deportment of this young man. He was no longer a bold and ardent aspirant after earthly renown, but an humble, docile disciple of Jesus Christ. He soon disclosed to his parents the fact of his conversion. How encouraging and sustaining must this disclosure have been to his aged father! The joy of the fainting patriarch, when he heard that Joseph was alive, was scarcely more ecstatic than was that of Mr. Clopton, when he was assured of the success of his efforts, and the consummation of his desire in the salvation of his son, Abner.

On the 1st of August, 1812, A.W. Clopton was baptized, and received into the fellowship of the Shockoe Baptist church, of which his father had long been an esteemed member It does not appear that the subject of this memoir experienced any embarrasment in the selection of a communion. His parents, and many of his intimate friends, were members of the Baptist church. He had been educated in Baptist principles. His knowledge of the original language of the New Testament enabled him to judge of the cor-

rectness of these principles. He might have entered a communion more distinguished for numbers, wealth, and literature, and more esteemed and admired by the world; but he sought to please God, and not men; he had no scruples to silence, no upbraiding conscience to bribe; he saw plainly the path of duty, and walked in it, promptly, and cheerfully. He commenced his religious course with commendable zeal, which was, unfortunately, for a while, greatly abated by the toils and cares of an important station which he filled.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Clopton appointed tutor in the North Carolina University—Practices medicine—Joins Ano Baptist church —Weekly prayer-meeting established—Interesting letter to his father—Exercised about entering the ministry —Increase of his religious zeal—Commences public labours for Christ—Great embarrassment in speaking—Erection of a house of worship—Thoughts of devoting himself wholly to the ministry—His views of communion—Connexion with the Orange Presbytery—Extracts from his correspondence.

In the close of the year 1812, Mr. Clopton received an invitation to take charge of the preparatory school connected with the University of North Carolina. He accepted the invitation, and continued, for six years, to perform the duties of the office. The institution was, at the time of his entrance on this service, in a very flourishing state. A spacious and elegant edifice was about to be erected. Dr. C., a gentleman of intellectual and moral worth, had just accepted the presidency, and entered on the discharge of its duties. Under the superintendence of Mr. Clopton the preparatory department prospered greatly. He had

generally under his tuition from fifty to sixty-five pupils. He was considered a fine classical scholar, and an excellent teacher. Pupils from his school were almost universally the best that entered the regular classes of the university. He possessed in a high degree the confidence and esteem of the students and trustees. His salary varied from $750, to $1000, per annum. These statements are made, mostly on the authority of the Rev. Mr. Morrison, of the Presbyterian church, who was at this period a student in the university, and very intimately acquainted with Mr. Clopton.

The physician of Chapel Hill removed about the time that Mr. Clopton settled there. He was not a graduate in medicine, but having read pretty extensively, and attended a full course of lectures on the science, he was frequently called to administer relief to the diseased. The following information is from the pen of his friend, the Rev. Mr. Morrison. Had Mr. Clopton chosen to practise medicine, I have no doubt he would have had an extensive practice, and stood very high in his profession. During his stay in Chapel Hill he never offered his services as a physician:

his engagements were such that he could not do it; yet he was often called upon to give medical advice. He was considered an exceedingly skilful physician, and his success, in some very difficult, and apparently hopeless diseases, was almost miraculous. His kindness was such that he would subject himself to great inconveniences and labour, to relieve those who were suffering. I recollect in one instance he seemed to feel the greatest satisfaction, and to express the greatest gratitude to God, because he had been the instrument of saving the life of a poor negro. Though he was often called to administer counsel and medicine to the sick, I never knew him to neglect his duties as a teacher. He would visit them in the morning, afternoon, or at night; (and, so far as I know, always gratuitously.) He sometimes thought seriously of devoting himself to the duties of this profession, for he saw clearly that it opened before him the way to competency, and even to wealth. But God designed him for another, and a higher service.

In the first of the year 1813, Mr. Clopton joined Ano Baptist church in the vicinity

of Chapel Hill. This church was under the pastoral superintendence of Elder R——, an aged, pious, and respectable servant of Christ, for whom Mr. Clopton entertained the highest esteem.

During the period of Mr. Clopton's residence in Chapel Hill, there was but little piety in the college, in the village, or even in its vicinity. "He became," says his esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Morrison, "in a remarkable manner the centre of religious attraction. Often did he lament this state of things, and pour out his soul for those perishing around him in their sins. During the last two years of my residence at Chapel Hill, there were usually four or five professors of religion connected with the college, besides the faculty. Of these a part were Presbyterians, a part Baptists, and one a Methodist. Mr. C. established a weekly prayer-meeting at his house, in which we all united. For about two years we met every Saturday night, spent from one to two hours in reading the Scriptures, singing, and prayer. Those were delightful meetings. God was, I believe, often with us by his Holy Spirit. Our hearts were united together in

love. I often look back to those meetings, and consider them as some of the most precious seasons of my life. Clopton was the soul, the moving spirit in them, so far as human instrumentality was concerned. In those meetings we never seemed to think of each other as Baptists or Presbyterians, but as brethren in Christ. After an experience of nearly twenty years, when I look back upon those seasons, I think in one respect we were chiefly defective. We looked too much at ourselves, and not sufficiently at the perishing multitudes around us. We seemed to feel that if God would enable *us* to withstand the torrent of iniquity around us, that this was enough, without duly directing our efforts to the salvation of sinners."

The following interesting letter, written by Mr. Clopton to his father, discloses the fact that his mind was beginning to be seriously, painfully exercised about entering the Christian ministry.

"Chapel Hill, Nov. 2, 1815.

"My dear father,—I do not remember ever to have enjoyed better health than during this year. This continued until about four

weeks ago, when I was attacked suddenly, and without apparent cause, with a hoarseness. On the second day I became alarmed, and abstained almost entirely from my usual food. I grew better, I thought, but the next day I was much worse, and was bled, but moderately. But I was filled with apprehensions; not like those I experienced in Philadelphia, because I then knew that I was a vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction; but now I was afraid, either that I had been under a total delusion as to my interest in the blood, the precious blood of the Redeemer, or (and this was the prevailing idea that created terror) that I had not been in the path of duty; that, instead of bearing much fruit, that the Lord might be glorified, I had been a barren fig-tree, a useless cumberer of my Lord's vineyard. I saw plainly, and felt, in a way which my language cannot describe, that I had not been careful to depart from iniquity; and at last became convinced that the Lord was about to remove me. In general I had a hope that I should be saved, 'yet so as by fire.' O, my dear father, if you could only realize what I experienced on that night, when I kneeled

down four or five different times to supplicate a rich, a never-failing throne of grace; if you could have heard the charge brought against the unfaithful steward, and seen him, instead of melting into tears at the gracious reception and kind welcome of his master, filled with unbelief and dreadful apprehensions; with a heart as hard as the nether millstone; no sleep to his eyes, nor rest to his soul;—if you could realize all these, surely you would, you must believe, that a Christian may live far, very far from the path of duty.

"This awful state of mind tended powerfully to increase the fever in my lungs. In the morning of the eighth day I thought I was much better; but the gloom of my mind had not left me. I rode, with a particular friend, to Raleigh. I had not gone three miles before I began to cough much, and to eject a great deal of the most nauseous mucous imaginable, accompanied by a continued rattling, like a person dying. I and my friend talked much on the subject of religion; and, as I was sure my case was determined, I began to take fresh hope, and feel, sometimes, something like resignation. I wept—my friend wept with me;

and, although there remained some fear in regard to myself, I trust the day will never be forgotten."

Mr. Clopton's disease continued, with various symptoms, for several days, when he was relieved by copious bleeding. His mind, during this time, was fluctuating between hope and despair. At one time he "wept tears of resignation;" at another, his "enemies were permitted to prevail against him."

"You see, my dear father," he thus closes his letter, "I have been particular, but if I were to write all that I felt, I should fill many sheets. My general feelings were that, instead of warning sinners to flee from the dreadful wrath to come, I had acted the part of Eli; that I lived for the flesh; that I had known my master's will, and had not done it; that I had in many instances hearkened to the fair speeches of the serpent; that if I should be saved at all, it would be 'so as by fire;' and that the Lord, to prevent my reproaching his cause by my useless life, was, in mercy, about to remove me. After my recovery, I opened the Bible at the 12th chapter of Hebrews, and read, and hope the truth was applied to my

soul. This affliction, though not joyous while it lasted, will, I hope, through the mercy of God, be followed, should I live another year, by important consequences.

"I wish you not only to return thanks to God for my deliverance, but to pray mightily to him that he may give me courage to forsake all for the cross; to live to him alone; to promote his glory both in my life and death.

"Your son—the chief of sinners—less than the least of all saints—in filial and Christian love. "A. W. CLOPTON."

Mr. Clopton did not assume the fearful responsibilities of the Christian ministry without deep reflection, and earnest prayer for divine guidance. He was long and sorely exercised on this subject. His reluctance to engage in preaching the gospel was not overcome except by severe and repeated chastisements. This unwillingness appears to have arisen from various causes. Being almost absorbed in worldly pursuits, he lost, in a great degree, his first love. He did not retain that deep and controlling sense of eternal realities with which he commenced his reli-

gious course. This coldness was not the less, but the more deplorable, because it was common among the servants of Christ. Mr. Clopton's letters, during the period referred to, contain convincing proofs of the correctness of these statements; they do not breathe the spirit of ardent devotion by which they are subsequently distinguished. His unreserved communications plainly show that though he maintained a decent and current profession of Christianity, he did not live near the throne; did not enjoy "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." It is evident that a man in this state of mind, entertaining correct views of ministerial labour and responsibility, would be unlikely to enter the sacred office. A man destitute of godliness, with narrow views, and of ignoble ambition, may rush without reflection into the solemn service; but the sincere Christian needs to be impelled to it by an ardent love to souls, and a consuming zeal for the glory of God.

Mr. Clopton's popularity as a medical practitioner presented a strong barrier to his entrance on the Christian ministry. He found it no easy matter to relinquish affluence and

worldly distinction, brought within his grasp by years of patient toil, for a profession which promised him little on earth besides toil, poverty, and reproach. It is remarkable, too, that in those seasons when his mind was peculiarly exercised concerning his call to preach the gospel, his prospects as a physician were most bright and tempting. He shall speak for himself on the subject. "You know," he says, in a letter to his father, "I was first arrested in my mad progress to destruction while studying physic; and I had, dreadful thought! again concluded to abandon what my conscience told me was my duty, as well as my best interest, for the practice of physic. An *idol* was at the bottom of it. And when I think of it even now, it appears so incredible that the grace of God should be extended again to so [vile] a wretch, that I can scarcely believe it real. The exercises I have had in regard to the ministry have been new and strange. I was more obstinate than Jonah, and appeared to myself to be just such another as Pharaoh; for while my disease would seem to be a little worse, I would consent to let go my idol, and have the Lord

for my God; yet when the rod was partially removed, I would feel disposed to rebel. But bless the Lord, O my soul! at last I cheerfully resigned what I believed was offensive in God's sight; and if the Lord intends that I shall do any thing for his glorious name's sake, I feel not the least disposition to lean on Assyria or Egypt for help. My affections are completely alienated from worldly objects."

Mr. Clopton entertained the most exalted views of ministerial character and responsibility. He considered the gospel ministry as the most solemn, the most important, and the most difficult work in which a man can engage. For this employment he felt himself entirely unworthy, and very imperfectly qualified. His embarrassment was increased by erroneous views respecting a call from God to this service. Not willing to enter the ministry because he possessed useful gifts, an earnest desire to promote the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, and was surrounded by an inviting field of labour, he waited for a call to the work little less than miraculous. This error was confined to his own case.

His opinions of a call to publish the gospel were clear and scriptural, and his counsel to those who, like himself, were exercised and perplexed on the subject was remarkably judicious. These temptations and buffetings, through which this servant of Christ passed, fitted him, in the end, for more extensive usefulness. He was eminently qualified by his own experience to "bind up the broken-hearted;" to be, as he truly was, "a son of consolation."

Toward the close of 1815, after the affliction described in the preceding pages, Mr. Clopton's religious fervour was greatly and manifestly increased. His letters began to breathe an unearthly spirit, which indicated that God was fitting him for some holy and important enterprise. The following extract from a letter to his father, dated January 8, 1816, may be read as a proof, and as a specimen.

"Since I left you, I have had much pleasure in reading, praying, and conversing about the unsearchable riches of Christ. I have not got my new Bible, but I send yours. O, how great a treasure! How thankful, how sin-

cerely grateful ought we to be to the God of mercies, that we have his revealed will in our native tongue, so that we, in spite of the pope and the devil, may read and know, if peradventure the Spirit accompany our reading, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; 'of whom' (I think I can sincerely say with Paul) 'I am chief!' — Yes, ever blessed be his name, that I have neither to fear the magnitude of my sins, nor to depend on any good works—good dispositions, natural or acquired, for salvation."

In the beginning of the year 1816, Mr. Clopton, mainly through the influence of his friend, Mr. Morrison, commenced his public labours for Christ, in the room appropriated to the preparatory school. "I was," says Mr. Morrison, "present at his first meeting. He exhorted: we both prayed. His exhortation was an excellent one; and delivered with much feeling. His meetings were well attended, and I have no doubt good was done."

Mr. Clopton was not destined to sail long on a smooth sea. A severe storm awaited him. The following account of his failure

in an attempt at exhortation, taken from the letter to his father quoted above, will be read with interest by those who have experienced the anxieties and conflicts incident to the commencement of extemporaneous speaking in the cause of Christ.

"On Saturday night came on again our prayer-meeting, which had been suspended for some time; and at which I had spoken several times to the great satisfaction of some, and sore grinding of others. I had heard of the offence, and was inclined to believe that I should probably injure my Master's cause by attempting any thing of the kind at that place afterward. I, therefore, resolved to keep silence. I promised to do so. But finding there were some who insisted that I should stand forth, I, at length concluded to attempt. After a prayer had been made, and a short sermon read, I got up; but the fear of man had taken possession of me, or unbelief, or the devil—I became weak in body, and weaker in spirit. It appeared that I could neither feel nor see—I said but little and even that to little purpose—I came home not fallen more in the view of others than of myself—

I could neither pray nor read—thinking or fearing that I had been rushing into a place too holy to be trodden by my feet. I fear too, I can assure you, that pride had too much to do in it. In viewing my whole course since I have confessed Jesus with my lips, it appeared that every single act, was, not only only stained with sin, but undertaken through vainglory. I concluded that the Lord had hitherto opened my lips in judgment, that my eyes might be darkened, and my soul deluded. I had a fever, and not much sleep that night. I hope I have since felt more humble."

Owing to his numerous and pressing engagements, Mr. Clopton did not frequently plead his Master's cause for some time after he commenced his ministry; but his active and enterprising spirit led him "to devise liberal things." In the spring of 1816, a convenient house of worship was erected, about two miles from Chapel Hill, through his liberality and influence. On the fourth Lord's day in June it was solemnly dedicated to the service of the "great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The services of the occasion are represented to have been highly interesting. Elders Ro-

berts and Brown were present, and preached with great power and acceptance. It was a time of love, of rejoicing, and of triumph. Mr. Clopton particularly was deeply affected by the "word preached." His heart was melted, and he was almost overwhelmed by a sense of Divine goodness. He closed an account of the scenes with the following appropriate acknowledgment: "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits! Praise the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, praise his holy name. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. Even so, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mr. Clopton cherished a lively interest for the salvation of his neighbours in Chapel Hill. In a communication to a pious friend in the close of 1816, he thus expressed his solicitude for their condition.

"Things remain" (in Chapel Hill) "as formerly with respect to our neighbours. What will become of this people, the Lord only knows. It appears to me that even now

there is scarcely salt enough among us to keep us from a state of complete moral putrefaction; and when the chief watchman shall be removed from the tower," (alluding to the expected removal of an eminent minister of Christ,) "when the candlestick shall be taken from the Hill, and removed to some other place, where will—but I forbear—I shall perhaps have my expectations—my ill-boding predictions, disappointed. It may be that the Lord has in reserve some great blessing: that the Sun of righteousness will ere long burst from behind these dark, lowering clouds, with additional splendour: that through this waste, howling wilderness may speedily blow streams of living water. Don't forget Chapel Hill when you bow the knee We deserve, richly deserve, to be spued out as being neither cold nor hot. But God will not forget his people whom he foreknow: the election of grace will yet obtain the blessing, and the rest will be blinded."

Mr. Clopton's mind continued to be greatly exercised and distressed about devoting himself *exclusively* to the Christian ministry. His numerous engagements so entirely occupied

his time that he had but little opportunity for reading the Scriptures, or even for secret devotion. His conviction was, however, constantly increasing that he could neither live, nor die happily, unless he directed his attention to a more important employment. A letter to his valued friend, the Rev. Mr. Morrison, dated January, 1817, may furnish the reader some idea of his temptations and conflicts. God was weaning him from the world, and fitting him for the self-denying services for which he had appointed him.

"My dear friend,—On the night after your departure I was alone, where I now am. I had just returned from a visit to a patient; where I mentioned that I had fully resolved upon prosecuting the practice of physic as a means of support. Before going to bed, I opened my Bible upon the chapter that contains these words: 'Wherefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober.' The comment of Dr. Scott I then read, and it had such an effect upon me, that I began seriously to hope, that I had awakened from my spiritual slumber, and would hence-

forward make vigorous efforts to watch and be sober. I felt that I was willing to take up the cross, and follow our great and adorable Captain into whatsoever trials or difficulties his providence might lead. Under these impressions, I, at a late hour, went to bed; and in the morning I awoke, and behold, it was a dream. My spirit of prayer was gone; the lamp of my zeal extinguished: and I just as destitute of gracious feelings, (if indeed it be proper to call my impressions by that name,) as Peter was of courage, when the maid told him he had been with his Lord. O, what a courageous soldier, what a faithful subject I am when there is no danger. But far less than shook the courage of him who told his Master, that though all others should forsake him yet he would not, daunts my courage, scatters my resolutions, and paralyses all my powers. Here, where there is nothing deserving the name of persecution, where there is no danger of stripes, or imprisonment—where the champion of the cross for speaking the things which he has seen or heard, can apprehend neither the loss of goods, nor the open abuse of the ungodly, I am still a very

coward. I cannot pray in public without much trembling: not I apprehend for fear of dishonouring the most glorious of all causes, but for fear that I may not perform so elegantly as my opportunities would justify my auditors in expecting. Yes, my dear friend, this is the Saul whose quiver, I fear, contains the weapons of my overthrow: this same self, which haunts me from day to day, and from hour to hour: this is the Achan which retards my progress: this is the gold that tempts my cupidity: this is the scarlet whore whose smiles allure my feet toward the chambers of death. How shall I crucify the monster? How shall I stone to death this troubler in the camp?

"O, I know I must not sleep as do others, yet I am sure that I sleep. Could a faithful watchman be awake, and not sound the alarm when hosts of enemies are daily surrounding the walls of his sovereign! Can he be faithful who not only forbears to warn others, but even ventures to hold converse—to parley with the enemies without the camp?

"I am not drunken with wine or strong drink; but still I am not sober. Can he be

sober who has found poison, deadly poison, in every draught of sensual pleasure, and yet repeats the mad experiment? Does the sober man continually stagger out of his known path? I not only sleep in daylight, but drink in the love of worldly objects. Yet are my obligations to be ever watchful, ever praying, ever running, ever striving; yea, agonizing, eternal in duration, and infinite in extent. O, may I not sleep the sleep of death!

"May Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, own and accept you, my dear friend, as a member of his mystical body; as bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Adieu. "A. W. Clopton."

No certain information has been obtained of the success of Mr. Clopton's labours in the ministry, in Chapel Hill, and its vicinity. There is reason to hope that the seed which he scattered was not wholly unfruitful; but the harvest can be estimated only in the light of eternity.

Mr. Clopton was, in the early part of his Christian life, an open communionist. He

did, perhaps, on more occasions than one, commune with the Presbyterians. This course, producing dissatisfaction in the church, he was led to a careful examination of the subject, and to a full conviction that close communion is according to truth, and essential to the prosperity of the Baptist denomination. Of this entire change in his opinion, there does not remain a single doubt. When he commenced his pastoral labours in Charlotte, Mr. E. W. Roach, a Baptist of that county, was undecided as to the propriety of close communion. He stated to Elder Clopton his scruple on this point. This induced him, not only to relate his own exercises and practice in relation to it, but to enter on a full, clear, and forcible discussion of the subject, by which Mr. Roach was convinced that the practice of strict communion in Baptist church is consistent, wise, and well pleasing to God.

It appears from the testimony of the Rev. Mr. Morrison, that Mr. Clopton, during his residence at Chapel Hill, in order to take a regular and thorough course of preparation for the Christian ministry, placed himself

under the care of the Orange Presbytery. He did not long remain under their guardianship. Finding that the advantages of this connexion were not so great as he had anticipated, and that its continuance caused uneasiness and dissatisfaction among his Baptist brethren, he dissolved it. His intimate friend, Mr. Morrison, states, "He was received by the presbytery with the distinct understanding that he was a *Baptist*, and that he was a candidate for the ministry in the *Baptist*, and not in the Presbyterian, church. I am the more particular on this subject, because I know that, about this time, some of his Baptist brethren had their fears that he intended to join the Presbyterian church. I am perfectly confident he *never* had any *such intention*. If any one knew his whole heart on every subject, I believe I did; and if he ever thought of such a thing, I never knew it. He was a *decided Baptist* in sentiment, during my whole acquaintance with him. On this subject I never knew him even to waver."

I confess the above fact appears to me a little singular: an independent Baptist mi-

nister under the care of a Pedobaptist presbytery! I should hardly believe it, if it were not confirmed by unquestionable testimony. It indicates, however, the kind and Christian feelings reciprocated between Mr. Clopton and the Presbyterians of North Carolina—feelings which adorn and recommend our common Christianity. While the same feelings will, we trust, be cherished by thousands, a similar manifestation of them is not likely to occur frequently.

The following extracts from Mr. Clopton's correspondence, during his residence in Chapel Hill, must close this chapter.

"Chapel Hill, May 16, 1817.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I never take up my pen to write to *you*, without a conscious unworthiness, which delicacy forbids me to express. I would, at such a time, if I could, have my faith in exercise—my bosom glowing with love, zeal, and every other Christian grace, that I might write something worthy of your attention. But I daily realize [the truth of] that expression of the great apostle of the Gentiles, 'Ye cannot do the things

that ye would.' Your letter, my dear friend, came seasonably. I have scarcely *now* any society but my books. These, indeed, cannot fully supply the loss of your heart-cheering company. But, in my Bible, I find every thing that is absolutely necessary to make me happy. Here is not only a description of all my diseases, their remote and proximate causes, but the remedies to be applied to each. I read more now than I have ever done before; and, I hope, with more profit. I pray daily to have the native darkness of my understanding removed, the native perverseness of my will changed, and all my faculties brought in unison with the commands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O, the precious, the irrevocable hours that I have devoted to self and the devil! What would I not give that they had been otherwise employed? But it may be, my dear brother, that where sin—aggravated, enormous sin, has abounded, all-conquering, unsearchable, inconceivable grace shall much more abound. Could I have believed, two months ago, that I should now, in perfect health, be permitted to speak and write of

the goodness of that God, for whose vengeance my iniquities so loudly called! O, the height, the depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ; and O, the black ingratitude, the strange insensibility of man! Let Jesus be removed out of sight, and all would be dark and mysterious. If I were not permitted, guilty and polluted as I am, to look up to the blood-stained cross for the atonement of sin, and the robe—the seamless robe of righteousness, I should be in hell here upon earth. But blessed be the God of Israel, whose kind and sweetly inviting command is, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved.' Here the dread king of terrors drops his scythe; here Sinai changes her dreadful thunders and lightnings into the soft notes of celestial music; here the avenging sword of justice is turned from the guilty murderer; and, in short, here is to be found all the poor, the wretched, the miserable, the blind, and the naked can desire.

"Now, my beloved friend, I must touch upon a subject which makes me groan hourly while awake. O, how shall I express my awful situation! For the work of the mi-

nistry who is sufficient? I fully believe God can qualify those whose attainments in human knowledge are feeble. But here I feel insufficient. But what I have to mourn over is not only a want of a more positive call, that I might magnify mine office: but I want bowels of mercy and compassion for my perishing brethren. Without God be pleased to give me this, I shall go in vain. I am in a great strait, and have been for weeks past; and, surely, if I needed your prayers while disease was preying upon my vitals, much more do I now need them. I ventured, on the last Sabbath, to make an appointment to preach at Mount Carmel, on the Lord's day after next. Whether, if I should live and make the attempt, the Lord will own it as preaching, he alone knows. I cannot live, nor could I die, happily, without making the attempt. But, O, the cursed desire of pleasing man—of being called a good preacher: and all that the devil ever suggested to any poor creature, under such trying circumstances, these haunt me continually. If I could have a single eye to the glory of God, so that my whole body

might be full of light; if I could realize continually the value of immortal souls; the infinite price that was paid for their redemption, in the sorrowful, holy life, and dying groans of the Saviour; if death, hell, and judgment were not as idle, speculative names to me; if my soul were so enlightened by the Divine Spirit, that I could feel these subjects in all their importance; *then*, *then* I could go forward, like David, in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. But never did any real Christian, I apprehend, go into the ministry with more embarrassment. Do pray that I may not add to the reproach which I have already brought on the cross.

"Believe me, when I tell you I love you.

"A. W. CLOPTON."

"*Mr. J. Morrison.*"

"Chapel Hill, July 29, 1816.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—When I look at the church, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian, and Methodist, and behold a great portion who, to all appearance, have nothing more than the form of godliness, I cannot

but conclude that much of the evil is attributable to the ministry. The great prize aimed at does not seem to be an exact conformity to the Lord Jesus, in holiness of heart and life. Among us it seems to be as it was in Corinth, after Paul had left them. Who is the greatest preacher? Who is the most ingenious reasoner? Who makes the best appearance in the pulpit? How much has been collected for the mission? How much for the education fund? Now, my dear friend, not to depreciate the exertions that have been, and are still making, for the spread of the gospel; to me it seems quite apparent, that there is much thunder and little rain. The vineyard decays: wild grapes, in rich luxuriance, burden the vines. With you I hope it is otherwise. My prayer is, that you may preach Christ; that you may make him the polar star of your ministerial compass.

"You apprehend that my ordination is past; but it is not so. If the Lord will, this will take place on the fourth Monday in October. My appointments are attended by many; but I believe that some of my brethren do not relish my doctrine. But while

I do preach, if the Lord will, I shall not prophesy smooth things.

"Zion is in dust and ashes. Whether the Lord will finally give up this place, without saving a remnant, remains concealed in the eternal counsel of his will. If God will, though present appearances are very forbidding, he needs only put forth his might—he needs only commission his Spirit to assault the strong man's palace, and the work is done. O how unspeakably important were these words of our blessed Redeemer, 'Mine hour is not yet come!' Were all the bright intelligences in heaven, and all the saints upon earth, combined, how vain—how impotent would be their attempt to hasten the new birth of one soul! Let us then say, 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.' Your brother, the most unworthy in Christ.

"A. W. C."

"*Rev. J. Morrison.*"

"Chapel Hill, August 19, 1818.

'MY DEAR FRIEND,—A consciousness that my temper is strongly inclined to positiveness, will, I hope, moderate my ardour and

self-will, in all cases not divested of doubt. O, if I could but become possessor of that 'charity which suffereth long, and is kind, &c.' then, methinks, I could write, and speak, and act, and feel, far more suitable to the condition of a sinner, and the high character of a Christian, than I do. And yet, my dear friend, though this seems so foreign from my character, Paul makes it the *sine qua non* to vital faith. O, how low, how contemptible, how *accursed* (Luther would say) are the greatest—the most admired gifts, when put in the balances of the sanctuary against this! Without this, Gabriel's tongue—without this, Solomon's wealth and Solomon's wisdom—without this, Paul's zeal, and Abel's blood, can stand in no stead. And yet, who does not more covet gifts—shining, admired gifts, than this celestial, this eternal grace, accessible, through the blood of sprinkling, to the weakest and most illiterate of God's people.

"Upon reading this chapter, (1 Cor. xiii.) some time in the spring past, I was so wrought upon, that I then thought I would read it at least once a week. But, alas! I can scarcely depend on myself for one hour's

credit. It does appear to me that the prevailing temper of my heart bears so complete a contrast to this picture of true charity, that I ought to do nothing besides praying, until I could trace some more resemblance between them. My unhallowed thoughts are countless from day to day. And whatever my outward actions may be, though I am conscious of walking very unworthily of my vocation, it seems almost incredible, that one of God's people should be permitted to think so much evil as I do. When I say this, I do not mean for you to understand that I design evil: far from it. But I allude to the multitude of foolish, abominable, accursed ideas with which I am tormented from day to day. I would fly from them; I would banish them; I would slay the odious monster, sin, when he thus rushes upon me. I pray—I wrestle—but even in prayer he assails me. Here he is most odious—most tormenting. Sin, in his ten thousand shapes, may be compared to the harpies mentioned in Virgil, Æneid, book iii. When the sacrifice was prepared, nothing could prevent their defiling it:—

"'——Contactuqui omnia fordant
Immundo.'

When they were expelled from one part, ('Rursum ex diverso cœli,') again they would approach from another quarter; and all efforts to drive them away were ineffectual. I think my besetting sin is very like Celæno, the chief of them. I would not call it Celæno, but Self. This is not only like Celæno, but Proteus. There is no place so sacred, no shape so strange or unnatural, in which this chief of the furies does not make her attacks. It is this spoils my prayers—my sermons—my all. And if I have a good moment, it is not in the triumphant exultations of conscious victory, or enthusiastic joy; but when I can say, in the midst of clouds and darkness, surrounded by the harpies, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' or, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' It seems to me, if I had ten thousand tongues employed every moment, all would be insufficient to reiterate this my best prayer. Yea, I know they would avail nothing, but for that 'Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' May Christ dwell in you, and you in him. Amen. "A. W. C."

"*R— I. Morrison.*"

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Clopton leaves Chapel Hill—Settles in Milton, North Carolina—Reasons for doing so—Labours in the vicinity—Sickness—Willingness to devote himself entirely to the ministry—Affection for his pupils—Interesting letter to a pupil—Incident—Letter on affliction.

Mr. Clopton left Chapel Hill in the summer of 1819. He had several reasons for this removal. The trustees of the institution were discussing the propriety of closing the preparatory department. Most of his intimate and beloved friends had left Chapel Hill. He felt himself solitary. He had received invitations to settle in Beaufort, South Carolina, Salisbury, Germantown, Guilford, and Milton, North Carolina, with encouraging prospects of profit and usefulness. He resolved, after mature deliberation, to settle in Milton. His reasons for preferring this invitation, are furnished by himself in a letter to a friend, dated October, 1819.

"In my last letter I informed you that I had received a very affectionate invitation to settle with the Baptist church, in Beaufort, South

Carolina, and that it was my purpose to accept the call. On account, however, of the prevalency of the bilious fever on the island generally every fall, and of the great distance I should be removed from all my kindred and dear friends, I felt a reluctancy at settling there of which I never got entirely clear. I had been invited to preach at this place, (Milton,) but knowing that the people would not give me a decent support, and being determined not to take upon myself the laborious drudgery of teaching, I had abandoned every idea of residing here. However, the people having completed a handsome brick building for an academy, determined, in order to give efficacy to their plan of education, to obtain a clergyman to superintend the academy, and preach for them. The lot unanimously fell upon me. And as I am exempted from teaching, and have the privilege of preaching, at least, once a month in the country, I thought the situation eligible enough to claim my preference. My salary is fixed at $800. There are very few professors of religion in the place."

The period of Mr. Clopton's life spent in

Milton, was uneventful. He preached frequently in the village, and in the adjacent country, with acceptance, but without great apparent success. He found it impossible to enter fully into the spirit of his ministry, while vexed with the cares of a large academy. The following interesting extract from one of his letters written during his residence in Milton, exhibits the state of his heart, and the severity with which he judged himself.

"How miserably blind, stupid and rebellious are mortals! We profess to have taken the Lord for our God; to have given ourselves and all we have to him; to listen to his instructions, obey his precepts, trust in his atonement, and submit to his easy reign. But, alas! how prone are we to murmur at his dispensations, question his wisdom and dispute his authority. Otherwise, why should we be so very averse to drink that cup which he has mingled? Why should we so nauseate those medicines which he sees needful for our health? Why should we despise those chastisements which parental love imposes? or faint under those rebukes which are reluctantly inflicted? We are, or at least think

that we are, conscious of our ignorance—our rebellion—and our ingratitude. But at the same time we act as if we really believed that we could better administer the covenant, than our covenant Head can. But in truth my greatest fear is that the light which is in me is darkness: that I am crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. I ask myself, not unfrequently, can it be possible, that one so unlike the Lord Jesus Christ in all respects, can be, at the same time, the brother of the first born of many brethren? Where there is a consciousness of so much depravity, and so little humiliation: a ground for so much admiring and adoring love, and at the same time scarcely any sense of obligation: so much light in the gospel, and so much darkness and unbelief in the understanding: so much reason to hate sin, and crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and yet scarcely any semblance of holiness in the life: so much love to self, and so little zeal for the Lord—I say, where these things really exist, if I dare rejoice it must be with trembling. If I call myself a Christian, surely I ought to confess myself to be only in the dawn of existence. And yet I am

constantly prone to censoriousness, suspicion and distrust. I am prone to every thing that is abominable. Knowing this, and being no more sensibly impressed with the consideration of eternal things, I am frequently brought to fear seriously that I have never yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is remarkable that every important change in Mr. Clopton's life was preceded by affliction. Near the close of 1821, he was visited again by disease. This paternal chastisement broke the last cord which bound him to the world, and brought him to the solemn purpose of embracing the first opportunity of devoting himself *exclusively* to the work of gospel ministry. The following extract from a letter to a beloved friend and brother, dated in December of that year, details the happy exercises of his mind during his sickness, and manifests his anxiety to enter fully into the gospel harvest.

"During my illness I was not troubled as formerly, with gloomy, desponding apprehensions. My mind, for the greater part of the time, was so calm, that I could not pray for

the restoration of my health without reference to the will of God. I often felt a willingness to live for weeks in that condition, provided that by that means I might be better qualified to preach the gospel. But, alas! the health of my body is restored; but I have been so busily employed in worldly matters that I feel less qualified than ever. I seem to be in a state of apathy, perfectly insensible of the importance of that office, to which I have thought myself called. God alone knows what I ought to do. When confined to the school my duties are so arduous, having to teach children seven hours in the day, there is but very little leisure for study. I now feel myself at as great a loss as I was when I left Chapel Hill. I am confident I should not be satisfied with itinerating: and to sit down without any thing to live upon but the liberality of people who think it sinful, at any rate needless, to support a minister, seems to wear a cheerless aspect. And yet my conscience suggests that I shall never preach the gospel aright till I abandon school keeping. My salary has been enlarged as well as my duties:

and from this circumstance there is ground to fear covetuousness. What should I, what must I do? Our Redeemer said to one, 'Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou, and preach the kingdom of God.' If my poor labours have been blessed the fruit is yet invisible. Indeed it would seem strange if they should be."

Mr. Clopton entertained a tender affection for his pupils. Long after they were removed from his superintendence, he ceased not to pray and labour for their salvation. The letter below, written several years after he left Milton, to one of his dear pupils, a niece, was made, by God's blessing, the means of her conversion. It contains a solemn, pathetic, and pungent appeal. Hard must be the heart which can read it without emotion. It is hoped, that should it meet the eye of any of his pupils who are yet living "without hope, and without God in the world," it may constrain them to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. To the consideration of the young, the thoughtless, and the gay, it is earnestly commended.

"My dear E.,—A few days ago I was engaged in reading the memoir of Henry Martyn, a celebrated missionary from England to India; and I was very much struck with his expression of affection for his near relatives. He was first awakened, while at college, by a conversation with his younger sister. I could not avoid, in reading his experience, beholding a great contrast between his heart and my own: or rather, between the degree of grace in his heart, and that which is in my own; provided I may indulge the hope that I have any. My reflections brought to my mind your request, while I was with you last, that I would write to you. At that time my heart was much impressed, and I resolved to seize the first leisure moment to comply with the request. A crowd of business would still have procrastinated my purpose, but for a letter I received yesterday from Mr. ——, requesting me to preach the funeral of ——. I should be very glad to go, if it were consistent with prior obligations: but I had to decline going; and in my answer to Mr. ——, I was led to reflect, not only upon the once lovely ——,

but upon others of my pupils; and at the close I could not refrain from tears. Yourself and —— were among the most obedient and circumspect of my pupils. Surely she was amongst the most inoffensive and lovely girls whom I have ever known. But from a letter written to me by brother ——, I understand that her natural and acquired amiableness was an insufficient qualification for death, judgment, and eternity. She discovered herself to be a lost and helpless sinner: that she needed a Saviour, a Redeemer, an atonement for her sins.

"And if she needed a Saviour, who can die without one? If she regretted a prayerless life, what must be the awful condition of those whose lives are far less commendable than hers? And if the withering hand of death hath blasted this lovely flower; if it hath so soon faded away and expired, is it not time for her school-companions to consider their latter end? And of yourself, my dear cousin, I may emphatically inquire, wilt thou suffer this solemn call from heaven to pass unheard, unattended? I could have rejoiced if God, in his providence, had per-

mitted thee to be an eye-witness of her last hours. You might there have learned, peradventure, a lesson, so unwelcome to the mass of mankind, the vanity of the best natural qualities, while destitute of grace—while unadorned with love to God, and good-will to man. You might there have seen, with some good effect, perhaps, a picture of what you yourself must be in few years at most; and what you may be before the close of another year. And could you have seen your once lovely companion in the arms of death, and heard her cry for mercy, without a solemn application to your own case? Could you have listened to her warnings, expostulations, and heart-rending exhortations, without saying in your own heart, I will this day begin the too long neglected work of prayer? I will this day begin to seek the favour of my long forsaken God? But though this was not your privilege, though you will behold your lovely companion no more till the morning of the resurrection, when we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; though she is dead, yet she speaketh. If she is with glorified spirits

above, her unutterable bliss, in the presence of Jesus, beckons you to follow—invites you to a participation of all that is good, and great, and happy. But if she was unprepared—I here drop the pencil, and leave you to fill up the picture.

"Only four of my pupils, as far as I have learned, have become subjects of sovereign grace—disciples of the lovely Jesus. Alas! how emphatically illustrative is this circumstance of our Lord Redeemer's words:—'Wide is the gate, and broad is the road, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'

"I hope you will attend the funeral of ——, if possible. And may the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, bless the melancholy event, through the preached word, to your immortal soul, May you not depend upon a long life; but may you, while in health, make religion your chief concern. May you no longer live unmindful of that God whose you are; in whom you live, move, and have your being; and who hath

so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. My love to all; and be assured, that although you may neglect your own soul, I endeavour to intercede for you in my daily prayers. Your uncle,

"Abner W. Clopton."

The following incident is illustrative of Mr. Clopton's moderation and meekness. While residing in Milton, a man, for a supposed offence, became greatly enraged with him, threatening, if he should pass his door, to shoot him. His path to the academy passed the house of the angry man, and he resolved not to change his course. As he passed, his enemy stood in the door, but offered no violence. Mr. Clopton respectfully bowed, but received no attention. This was several times repeated, until the enraged man, subdued by condescension, became very friendly: thus he "overcame evil with good."

The following letter from Mr. Clopton, written during his residence in Milton, to his esteemed friend and correspondent, the

Rev. Mr. Morrison, contains some excellent and scriptural thoughts on affliction, which had been more than once verified in his own experience. It is entitled to a place in this memoir.

"I am truly glad that you have been sick; for if you are a child of God, an heir of the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away for ever, you must be *trained* up for it. And the school of affliction is best fitted to teach the heirs the worth of their inheritance, and the sovereignty of that grace by which it is bestowed.

"How long did Abraham and Sarai wait for the promise? how long did Job grope in darkness? mourn over his prosperous days passed; and pine in bitter anguish and tears for the sore disease of his body? I see, or I think I see, a Divine beauty and glory in that wisdom which is displayed in bringing those who are born children of wrath and heirs of hell, into the marvellous light and liberty of the sons of God. If it had not been for that thorn in the flesh that rankled and festered in Paul, is it probable that he would have been so very willing to depart

and be with Christ? It was the forty years' travel in the wilderness that rendered the land of Canaan so very pleasant to Israel. It is true that it flowed with milk and honey; and for this reason was desirable. But it was beheld at a distance by faith: and if Israel could have been safe and happy in Egypt, there Israel would have remained.

"I fear I am a bastard because I receive so little chastisement; and yet when the rod comes, no matter how gentle the strokes, I begin to fear that the Lord is about to destroy me, as an unbelieving rebel. I toss like a wild bull in a net. The truth is we can do no good without Christ. He prepares his ministers for their services. He sits as a refiner's fire; and he knows what is necessary. At this time I feel such an insensibility to eternal things that I am almost afraid to confess that I am on God's side.

"On the last Lord's day I was in Orange. On my way—and while I was there—and while returning, I attempted six times to preach. Five out of the six I had tolerable liberty. I was strengthened in faith, and preaching seemed to be my element. But,

alas! on Thursday last, and again to-day, I am like Saul, forsaken of the Lord. The enemy comes in like a flood; and I now begin to fear, that while I preach to others, I myself may prove a castaway. I ask myself, over and over again, how can I, if I believe the Bible, feel so little interest for the salvation of others! Why am I not more like Luther, Whitfield, and Paul? I cannot converse like yourself with the sick—there my lips are closed—there my affections are chilled—there I cannot mourn with them that mourn, and weep with them that weep. 'Jesus wept.' He wept over Lazarus, in sympathy with Martha and Mary. And methinks, if there be weeping in heaven, mine is a case that might cause grief—that I, a minister of Christ, should be so hard-hearted and unfeeling."

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Clopton's pastoral labours in Charlotte—Interesting period of his life—Condition of the churches—Mr. Clopton invited to settle among them—Accepts the invitation—Difficulties to encounter—Extracts from his journal—His discipline—Preaching—Private instructions—Several conversions resulting from his conversations—Visits—Incautious reproofs—Means of which he availed himself to promote religion among his churches—Successes—Remarks.

We have now reached the most interesting period in the life of Mr. Clopton. Charlotte county, Virginia, was for more than ten years the principal scene of his useful labours. Here his powers were vigorously employed, and his extraordinary piety was developed. We are henceforward to contemplate him as an affectionate, vigilant and faithful pastor, and a plain, ardent and laborious preacher, surmounting numerous difficulties by faith, patience and perseverance; silencing calumny by meekness and circumspection: and wielding a mighty influence for the glory of God, and the happiness of men. We shall have an opportunity of forming an intimate acquaint-

ance with his principles, habits, conflicts, and enjoyments. If we will attentively examine his history we may find much to reprove our supineness and unbelief; our pride and levity; our ingratitude and covetousness; the formality of our devotions and the misapplication of our talents: much to encourage and guide us through the conflicts and sorrows of life.

The Baptist churches in Charlotte were, in the latter part of 1822, in a deplorable condition. Their former pastor, Elder Richard Dabbs, had removed to the west. The churches were small and feeble, and discipline was greatly, if not entirely neglected. Previous to this time no provision, or a very inadequate one, had been made for the pastor's support. The spirit of benevolent enterprise was not found among them. All were cold, barren and leafless.

There was one who saw and deplored their wintry state: this was Mr. Bryan W. Lester, a pious deacon of a neighbouring church, who resided in the county. He became acquainted with Mr. Clopton, and saw that he was eminently qualified to resuscitate the expiring churches in Charlotte. Through the influence

of this zealous deacon they gave Elder Clopton a pressing invitation to settle with them. God had prepared him for the ready acceptance of this call. Repeated afflictions had made him willing to forsake all, and to endure all for Christ. Having fully resolved to embrace the *first* opportunity to devote himself wholly to the ministry, he unhesitatingly yielded to the invitation. Had he "conferred with flesh and blood," he would, doubtless, have sought a post, surrounded with fewer difficulties, demanding less self-denial and toil, and opening a brighter prospect of distinction. He relinquished an employment, of comparative ease, with a salary of $900 per annum, for the privilege of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ," to perishing men, with a bare, and even precarious prospect of support.

Elder Clopton commenced his pastoral labours in Charlotte in January, 1823. He was now in the maturity of life, free alike from the levity and indiscretion of youth and the infirmities of age. In his journal of March 25th he writes,—

"Yesterday was my birth-day, and I

entered on my fortieth year. Alas! my whole life appears to have been a mere span, and to have been unprofitable. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

The difficulties which he had to encounter in the prosecution of his pious efforts deserve a particular enumeration. The society in Charlotte being generally refined, he had little to dread from open and violent hostility; but he was viewed by many, who would not be thought unfriendly to religion, as a deluded enthusiast—a troubler of the peace. He preached a morality too strict; his descriptions of vice were too faithful; his appeals to the conscience too torturing; and his denunciations against sin too alarming, to please, or even to gain the toleration of men "who took pleasure in unrighteousness." So skilfully did he divide the word of truth that his hearers, with whom he was unacquainted, frequently considered his remarks addressed specially to them. Such preaching stirred up wrath, which was copiously displayed in sneers and reproaches. The Baptists, a sect almost everywhere spoken against, were at

that time, from various causes, peculiarly unpopular, both among other Christian denominations, and the world, in the sphere of his labour. In the churches he had to contend with obstacles quite as formidable and embarrassing. In some of them he felt greatly the need of likeminded and efficient assistants. His spirit was often damped, and his energies paralyzed by the lukewarmness of his brethren. The chief difficulty is yet to be pointed out. The churches had been trained to a lax and unscriptural discipline. Vice, open and cherished vice, had been tolerated in virtue of professed repentance and promised reformation. "I am sorry: I will do better," was the ready atonement for the oft-repeated transgression. It was with extreme difficulty that some of the churches could be induced to exercise a vigorous discipline against offenders.

These obstacles might have utterly discouraged an ordinary mind; and even Elder Clopton, distinguished, as he undoubtedly was, for zeal and energy, was twice on the very eve of leaving Charlotte, under the impression that his labours were unprofitable, and his prospect of usefulness not encourag-

ing. He yielded, however, to the earnest entreaties of his friends to remain. The hand of God, though unseen, doubtless, guided him for good. These discouragements tended to increase his consciousness of insufficiency, and to lead him to a firmer reliance on Divine assistance. The blood and righteousness; the promises and faithfulness; and the compassion and power of Christ, afforded him, in the most gloomy seasons, hope and encouragement.

We find in his journal the following insertion, entered shortly after the commencement of his arduous labours in Charlotte. "The perusal of Edwards' resolutions and experience, as contained in his diary, has so affected my heart, that I am induced to transcribe the former into this little book: that I may have them always at hand. They are so excellent, that although I shall not pretend to subscribe my hand to them; yet I will pray for grace to enable me to imitate, while I look after as it were, and aim to follow this great man of God."

Here follow, in the journal, sixty-five resolutions, the first of which is inserted as a spe-

cimen of the whole, and, indeed, as comprehending the rest.

"Resolved, that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit and pleasure, on THE WHOLE; without any consideration of the time, whether now or never so many myriads of ages hence; to do whatsoever I think to be my *duty*, and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general .... whatever *difficulties* I may meet with, how many and how great soever."

The following extracts from his journal will enable the reader to perceive the deep self-abasement, the ardent zeal, and the firm reliance on God, with which he prosecuted his labours.

"*May* 1, 1826. Another month closed yesterday: during this month I have endeavoured to preach twenty-four times. Most of my time I have, I trust, had some degree of liberty. But even when made conqueror, through grace, over my inward corruptions, I find that my words cannot reach, with power and efficacy, the heart of stone. I still prophesy upon dry bones:

"'In vain I call, in vain I cry,
Till God's all-conquering grace is nigh.'

'While beholding around me multitudes of Christless, perishing sinners, I am consoled and supported by such declarations as these: 'Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning.' 'All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.'

"But I have also much reason to fear that my want of success in preaching the gospel, may be attributed, in a certain sense, to something wrong in myself.

"Conscious am I that my zeal bears no proportion to the glorious cause in which I am engaged: that the degree of my godly sorrow, if I have any, bears no just proportion to the magnitude and multitude of my offences: that my love bears no comparison with my obligations; and that my faith does not correspond, in degree, with the weight of evidence that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

"O, for that faith which is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen! O that the God of all grace, mercy, wisdom, justice, truth, knowledge, and power, may inspire my soul with life divine—my heart with love divine; and fill me with the fulness of God: so that I may walk as in his immediate presence—have an abiding sense of the worth of immortal souls—the certainty and solemnity of death, judgment, and eternity; and with greater earnestness, stronger faith, and more tender compassion, point dying sinners to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

'*June* 1, 1826. Another month a kind and merciful God hath added unto my life; during which time I have preached twenty-five sermons. In this period I have seen some effect under preaching, and hope good hath been done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But although I have enjoyed liberty in preaching, as much as I ever did during one month, I have in this period been under sore temptations. For about thirty-six hours, my heart seemed a sink of sin and pollution.

And I have abundant reason to humble myself under the mighty hand of God—to loathe and abhor myself, and to repent in dust and ashes, under a recollection of my sins, and of the goodness of that God who hath spared and suffered me, and, as I hope, strengthened me to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to poor miserable sinners. Surely I am bound by ten thousand obligations to praise him; for his mercy endureth for ever. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.' "

Elder Clopton's first aim was to bring the churches under his charge to exercise a wholesome discipline. His views of church government are expressed with great clearness and force, in a circular which he wrote for the Appomatox Association. By some they were deemed unscriptural and excessively rigorous; but they received the cordial approbation of a large majority of the enlightened and pious Baptists. It was not to be expected that a system of discipline so

pure and inflexible could be enforced without opposition. Not only did offenders rebel, but some very good and honest men thought their liberties in danger. But the faithful pastor, having ascertained the path of duty, pursued it steadily and firmly. No false tenderness, no carnal policy, could, for a moment, divert him from his course.

Mr. Clopton paid commendable attention to the deportment of the coloured members of the churches. He visited the families in which they resided; made strict inquiry concerning their conduct; and offered them such instruction, admonitions, and encouragements, as their circumstances demanded.

Elder Clopton was a most diligent and laborious preacher of the gospel. The churches under his charge were scattered over a large extent of country. He preached, on an average, four or five times a week. Neither summer's heat, nor winter's cold; neither rain, nor snow, nor storm, ever prevented him from filling his appointments. His congregations all knew that he would meet them, unless providentially prevented. For several years he kept a brief diary, in

which he recorded the text, with the time and place of preaching every sermon. From this we may gain some idea of the extent of his exertions in his Master's cause. At the close of his diary for the year 1826, he inserted the following note: "If no mistake hath been made, I have preached, during the year, two hundred and ninety times, and frequently have I exhorted. In all probability, I have rode not less than four thousand miles. O, for a heart to love, and a tongue to praise God, for all his goodness toward me!" The labours of this year did not differ materially from those of other years. His diligence sprang from the living fountain of faith and love.

Mr. Clopton's sermons were not dry, metaphysical discussions; but plain, affectionate, solemn, and faithful exhibitions of the fundamental truths of revelation. He insisted much, and forcibly, on the native depravity of the heart. Vice, in all its shades and shapes, was sure to meet his burning rebuke. Covetousness and drunkenness, especially, never failed to receive a full share of his attention; and those of his hearers

who were unfortunately addicted to these vices, were soon reduced to the necessity of forsaking them, or of avoiding his searching appeals. His preaching was always directed to the consciences of men: like a skilful physician he probed the wound, not to give pain, but to heal. In his ministry he dwelt much on the fulness, compassion, and faithfulness of Christ: to exalt him was manifestly the end of his labours.

As we shall, in another place, delineate more particularly his qualifications as a preacher, we will merely insert a few extracts from his journal, as exemplifying more fully his diligence, zeal, and spiritual conflicts.

"*September*, 1826. The month of August is closed: during which I have preached about twenty-six times. Sometimes, I trust, the Spirit of the most high God was with me. But frequently my weakness hath been so sensibly felt as was that of Samson when shorn of his locks.

"During a period of nearly a day I was almost overwhelmed with a current of sinful propensity. Peace fled, and I seemed for a while given up of God. But I find that the path

of duty is the path of safety. By appointment I was compelled to preach; and herein life began to revive; and then fasting and prayer brought me to myself. Adored be that God who exercises long-forbearance and tender mercy toward me, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the Lord. I know not how to speak the praise due to his exalted name.

"*September*, 1826. In this month I have preached twenty-eight times, and baptized four persons. The exercises of my soul have been various—but in general my conflicts have been less severe than usual. Frequently I have enjoyed something like liberty in preaching the everlasting gospel. But, alas! how far am I from having attained to that degree of godliness which is visible even now in many of the saints;—how weak my faith—how faint my love—how low my desires after complete conformity to my adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. How little am I affected under a consideration of the perishing condition of poor sinners! When the blessed Jesus foresaw the calamities which should come upon Jerusalem, he wept. But I can-

not weep for sinners perishing around me in their sins."

Elder Clopton did not confine to the pulpit his efforts for the salvation of sinners. It was with him a fixed purpose never to omit an opportunity of pleading his Master's cause in private. He rarely engaged in any other than religious conversation; for he possessed a happy art of turning the current of attention from common and trivial to solemn and important topics. He seemed to breathe a holy atmosphere; in which it was almost impossible to trifle. The dignity of his demeanour, the keenness of his reproofs, awed levity into seriousness, and profanity into reverence. His visits were emphatically religious visits. He invariably sought to impart useful instruction, or needed reproof and encouragement, to every accessible member of the numerous families whose hospitality he enjoyed. He did not visit the rich in preference to the poor. "His heart," says one of his members, "was set on doing good. He found his way to the houses of the widow and orphan, the poor and afflicted, the unfortunate and uninstructed."

It may well be questioned whether Elder

Clopton's private instructions were not more useful than his public. Many have had cause to praise God for his solemn, faithful and affectionate warnings in the family circle. In his journal of June, 1826, he records: "I have baptized Mrs. B., who dated her first effectual conviction from a conversation I had with her at her own house." Mrs. B. was the wife of a pious minister, for whose salvation great interest had been manifested; but she remained, in a great degree, unimpressed with the importance of the subject until the awakening interview alluded to above.

In one of Mr. Clopton's congregations there was a young man who had unfortunately imbibed an infidel spirit. The faithful pastor felt deep concern for his salvation. After addressing to him a few plain and pungent remarks, at a meeting, he retired, as usual, to a contiguous grove to engage in private devotion. The young man secretly followed him to hear, if possible, his prayer. He did hear it, and found that himself was made an object of special, solemn, and most importunate intercession. The event made a deep

impression on his heart, which resulted in his conversion to God.

The following interesting anecdote is from the pen of Elder A. M. Poindexter, an esteemed pupil and intimate friend of Mr. Clopton.

"You are aware perhaps that brother Clopton made it a point to attempt something for the conversion of every individual in the families into which he was received, who was not pious. So strong was his conviction of the propriety and necessity of this course that, at the very commencement of his instructions to me, he enjoined upon me never to neglect an opportunity of doing so. On one occasion he stayed a night with a family, in which was a young lady decidedly irreligious. Her father and mother were pious. Brother Clopton sought, and obtained an opportunity of conversing with this young lady, and in the conclusion asked her if she would like to have him pray for her. She replied, 'No.' 'Why, do you not desire the prayers of God's people?' 'No.' The conversation ended. When the hour for family worship arrived, he led in that exercise. In his prayer he prayed specially for all the members of

the family except that young lady, remarking, 'O Lord! we pray not for her. She desires not the prayers of thy people!' As soon as the exercise was concluded she retired; but the solemnity with which he had excepted her in his prayers, fastened upon her heart the conviction of her guilt, and resulted in her turning to the Lord."

Mr. Clopton's visits were always greeted with delight, especially by the poor and afflicted of his flock. He possessed a sympathetic heart. He knew how to weep with those who wept, and to rejoice with those who rejoiced. Never was the poet's language more appropriate to a pastor.

"Needy, poor,
And dying men, like music heard his feet
Approach their beds; and guilty wretches took
New hope, and in his prayers wept and smiled,
And bless'd him, as they died forgiven; (and all
Saw in his face contentment, and in his life,
The path to glory and perpetual joy.)"

Perfection is not the lot of mortals. While we greatly admire, and commend to the universal imitation of pastors, the diligence, earnestness, and faithfulness of Elder Clop-

ton's private labours, we are constrained to confess that he sometimes offended by the *incautious* severity of his reproofs, those whom he wished to benefit. When sin was vindicated, or palliated, in his presence, he was sure to be exasperatingly sarcastic. His manner was repulsive, notwithstanding the tenderness of his feelings, the kindness of his heart. The dissolute and volatile generally shunned his presence. A deportment more mild, cheerful, and captivating would have ensured him a kinder access to many, and presented religion in a garb more accordant with the purity of her nature, and the elevation of her prospects. But when we reflect on his deep solicitude for the salvation of men, the tears with which he mingled, and the prayers with which he followed, his rebukes, and the signal success with which God crowned his efforts, we censure with trembling. And we must be permitted to affirm that we deem the opposite extreme—a spirit of levity, and conformity to the fashions and manners of the world—far more incompatible with the obligations of a Christian pastor, and detrimental to the interests of piety.

Mr. Clopton laboured privately not only in conversation, but with the pen, to promote the interests of religion. For the salvation of young men he cherished, as all pious and faithful pastors will, the deepest concern. He knew that they were the hopes of the church, as well as of the nation. He was desirous to conciliate that he might benefit them. He sought every opportunity to promote their temporal as well as their spiritual interests. For them he offered to God special, frequent, and fervent prayers. He gave them, when opportunity permitted, affectionate and judicious counsel. The following letter, addressed to a young gentleman just entering into the business of life, and about to be exposed to the dangerous temptations of a city, show at once his pious concern for his salvation and his faithful efforts to secure it:—

"February 28, 1831.

"My dear young friend,—It was my intention, after hearing that you intended to go to Richmond, to drop a word of counsel to you before you should leave the peaceful recesses of your father's house. As that

house has been to me the seat of hospitality for years past, I must needs feel some interest in the welfare of all pertaining to it. Solomon says, that a 'word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.' By this we may understand that the same words are much better adapted to produce a good effect at one, than at another time. The counsel of experience may, if attended to, produce a happy effect; and if it ever be needful to you, it is needful now. It is true you have been abroad a little; but you have now entered upon a new and untried scene. Although thousands have pushed themselves into infamy in spite of the very best instruction, and under the best external means of becoming good and happy; yet it is equally true, that good counsel and good instruction have been the means in countless instances, not only of restraining the carnal and corrupt propensities, but of forming the character of the young to every thing amiable—every thing excellent. You have just entered the vestibule of active life. O, how important that your first steps be right! One false step now—one conscience-wasting sin, would not only ruin your inward

peace, but blast your fair character. How bright have been, in the dawn of life, the prospects of many promising young men, who, nevertheless, have sunk under a cloud of infamy, never to rise again. And perhaps in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred their ruin might be traced to evil company. In God's book it is said, 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' He, who is familiar with all sorts of men, will soon be tempted to sacrifice principle, and every thing else. Let me urge you then, my dear friend, to choose your company with an eye to this truth.

"You are in the employ of a stranger, and he is, I trust, a good man. Remember that nothing short of the most rigid and punctilious regard to honesty and faithfulness will discharge your duty, keep your conscience clean, and preserve you that standing in good society, which will be a pledge of acceptance and success in future business.

"Industry and economy are the best estate—honesty is the best policy—temperance the

best medicine—and a good conscience the best companion. And do you inquire how you may secure these good things? God's book must be your directory. But I will drop you a hint or two. Make the reading of your Bible a point in the arrangement of every day's business. Attend upon public worship punctually. Go, not as a mere spectator, but remembering that you are accountable to God, and must sooner or later stand before his bar to answer for the deeds done in the body; and that the gospel is the instituted means of obtaining the salvation of your soul. Nor can you begin to pray too soon: nor can you pray too fervently, nor too frequently.

"It must now often occur to you that you have left behind you most dear parents, whose bowels of love often yearn over you, that look to you with a hope that you may honour their name, in the decline of their lives, and perpetuate it when they shall have resigned their bodies to the tomb. You can hardly forget that your mother is a disciple of the blessed Saviour: that she daily prays for you, and mourns through a fear that you may not be saved. O, if you should ever be so hardened

with sin as to cast off the fear of God, think, in the midst of your temptation to do evil, of your pious mother at home, and tremble at the thought of an act which would, if known, suffuse her cheeks with a blush, and plant the dagger of bitter anguish in the bosom of her who bore you. The writer of this counsel well remembers that the advice of a tender mother exerted an influence on him when almost every other motive had ceased to operate.

"I must not weary you. Let me urge you in conclusion to keep your Bible in your hand—hide its precepts in your heart—practise them in your life. Remember your Creator now in the days of your youth. 'Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

"That the Father of mercies may direct you, and bless you, and prosper you, and save you, is my prayer."

Elder Clopton availed himself of every means in his power to promote the interests

of religion among the people of his charge. He took great pleasure in introducing among them ministers of piety, talents and usefulness. He was superior to the meanness of dreading the eclipse of his own fame by more commanding gifts. No man rejoiced more sincerely than himself when the truth was preached to his congregations powerfully and effectually. He was willing to be nothing that Christ might be magnified.

He generally had one, and sometimes two young ministers boarding with him, partly to enjoy the advantages of his valuable library, and of his private instruction, and partly to assist him in the cultivation of his extensive field of labour. These young brethren have cause of fervent and lasting gratitude to God, that they were so intimately associated with one, whose dispositions were so amiable, whose friendship was so sincere, whose piety was so exemplary, and whose conversation was so edifying. We sincerely wish that they may catch the falling mantle of their excellent teacher, and that he may live and labour in those who received his instructions.

He was a zealous supporter of Sunday-

schools and Bible-classes. Perceiving their conformity to the spirit and precepts of revelation, and their adaptation to promote the intelligence and piety of the rising generation, he established and encouraged them in all his congregations. It may well excite astonishment and lamentation that any man professing to be a disciple of Jesus should oppose, or censure, or even refuse to promote, institutions designed to impart to children and youth the knowledge of saving truth.

As Mr. Clopton believed that *knowledge*, not *ignorance*, is the mother of true devotion, he was careful to furnish the people of his charge, especially the poorer classes, with the means of acquiring useful information. For several years he was an agent of the Baptist General Tract Society. Besides forming a great number of auxiliary institutions in the surrounding country, he scattered, with an unsparing hand, the valuable publications of the parent society, through his stated field of labour.

He viewed a well-conducted *religious periodical* as an important means of diffusing intelligence, and elevating the standard of

piety. Through his influence, almost every reading family, within the sphere of his efforts, patronised one. He was at much expense to supply the churches with *suitable religious books.* He generally had some on hand, which he sold at a small profit, that he might be enabled to give the more to the needy. He aimed to place in every family a copy of the "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;" and that, too, several years before the benevolent plan of placing a copy of the bound volumes of the American Tract Society in every family of the southern states, had been conceived.

The amount of good accomplished by *these means*, in creating a thirst for knowledge, diffusing information, and fanning the flame of piety and benevolence, cannot be estimated. The writer knows a lady of exemplary piety, who was first effectually awakened to the importance of religion, by reading a copy of the "Rise and Progress," which that diligent man had put into circulation.

Success is not a certain criterion of ministerial faithfulness or ability. Preachers of fervent zeal and eminent qualifications have

been, sometimes, constrained to exclaim,—"I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught." The personal ministry of Christ, which was characterized by pre-eminent simplicity, faithfulness, and pungency, does not appear to have converted many of the blinded Jews. He sowed precious seed; but it fell mostly on the beaten, unproductive way-side. Yet, as a general remark, it is true that preachers are useful, in proportion as they possess the spirit of their Master, and publish his truth plainly, affectionately, skilfully, and diligently. "Them that honour me," says God, "I will honour."

The labours of Mr. Clopton in Charlotte, considering they were frequently interrupted by his efforts in behalf of the "Columbian College, in the district of Columbia," (an account of which will be hereafter given,) were signally successful. The churches were brought under strict and evangelic discipline. Cemented by love, they were of one heart, of one mind, and of one way. The number of persons received into their communion, during his pastorate, is not precisely known: it is certain, however, that the accessions

were large and respectable. They enjoyed several "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord:" one particularly, which, commencing in the summer of 1831, continued more than a year. In a letter to Dr. Chapin, under date of August, 1832, he writes, "I have the pleasure to inform you that there is still a precious revival in some parts of the vineyard where I labour. I have baptized, as I think, about one hundred and forty persons since the middle of August last." The churches were not increased in numbers more than in knowledge, piety, usefulness, and respectability. In a communication to Dr. Semple, dated January, 1831, Elder Clopton remarks, "There is but one person in all my churches, so far as I believe, who drinks ardent spirits. Not one Campbellite is found in our ranks." These churches were cheerful and efficient supporters of all our benevolent institutions. Enlightened by the instructions, and animated by the example of their venerated pastor, they made praiseworthy sacrifices in the Redeemer's cause; especially, for the promotion of ministerial education.

The "Report on the State of the Churches," appended to the minutes of the Appomattox Association, in 1832, contains the following statements concerning the churches over whom Elder Clopton presided :—

"*Ash Camp.*—This church was blessed with a revival during the summer and fall of 1831. The number added in the associational year is twenty-three. Several have been since baptized; and others, it is believed, will soon follow their example. This church is uniformly distinguished for its liberal support of the ministry. There are two Sabbath-schools in the neighbourhood; and it is intended to renew the Sabbath-school at the meeting-house early in the spring. The Bible-class is also renewed. Here is a flourishing temperance society; and Ash Camp meeting-house will be memorable in the annals of temperance, as being the place at which the Virginia Temperance Society was formed.

"*Chany's Chapel.*—This church was constituted a few years ago with seventeen members. The Lord revived his work in the last summer, and fifteen were baptized in the

associational year. It is understood that several have been baptized since the association, and that appearances are still promising. Here is a flourishing Sabbath-school, and a good Bible-class, and a growing temperance society; and here the minister is well supported.

"*Mossingford.*—This church has experienced a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. A revival commenced in July, 1831; since then about one hundred members have been added; and the blessed work is still in progress. Here is a flourishing temperance society; and here, too, is liberality and punctuality in support of the ministry. That there is no Sabbath-school is owing to the peculiar circumstances of the neighbourhood, and not a want of disposition in the church to encourage such institutions. There is a Sabbath-school not far distant, and it is intended to revive the Bible-class."

The question will naturally arise in many minds, "Why did Elder Clopton assume the pastorship in so many churches?" The arrangement originated not in his preference: he saw, admitted, and deplored the evil. It

must be traced to the circumstances of the churches: they were feeble, poor, and unaccustomed to make sacrifices for the support of a pastor; but had they been ever so able and willing to support one singly, suitable teachers could not have been obtained.

It is but fair to presume, that, through the ministry of this good man, some were hardened in their sins. For this result, however, he was not responsible. He preached the truth—preached it in love—watered it with his tears; and sought, by fervent supplication, the blessing of God on his hearers; and if any, through their prejudice and perverseness, rejected the word of salvation, the fault was their own. Even an apostle could say, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

How inscrutable are the ways of God! This eminent man was called from his labours just as the prospect of usefulness was brightening around him. He had, by his uniform and godly deportment, silenced the censures

of his enemies, and won the entire confidence and warm affection of all the members of his extended charge. In public sentiment he occupied an enviable elevation. He had drawn around him the confidence—the esteem—the veneration of an intelligent and respectable community. If some questioned the wisdom of his measures, none doubted the integrity of his motives. If he was not esteemed a great preacher, he was allowed by all to be a devoted and useful one. The houses in which the congregations worshipped, had all been rebuilt and enlarged, with special reference to the accommodation of the coloured people. His ministry was attended by throngs of interested and respectable hearers. The fields, white to harvest, were inviting him to put in the sickle, and gather fruit unto life eternal.

CHAPTER V.

An account of Elder Clopton's labours in the Appomattox Association, and in other parts of the state—His first appearance at the association—Its condition—Writes two circulars for it—Extract from that on "Church Discipline"—From that on "Ministerial Ordination"—Deportment in the body—Effect of his preaching at Powhattan court house—In Spottsylvania—Account of camp meeting—His correspondence.

"NOTHING is done while aught remains to be done." Never did man act in more perfect accordance with this sentiment than did the subject of this memoir. His opportunities to do good were the only limit of his exertions. His labours and influence were not confined to the churches under his immediate care, but extended throughout the Appomattox Association, of which he was for ten years a member, and into many and distant parts of the state.

Elder Clopton first attended the anniversary meeting of the Appomattox Association in August, 1823. It was then a feeble body. Some of the ministers were tottering under

the accumulating weight of years; and most of them were compelled to follow secular employments for the maintenance of themselves and families. Several of the churches were destitute of pastors, and by most of them wholesome discipline was neglected—sin was connived at through false tenderness, and little or no provision was made for the support of the gospel ministry. He was cordially welcomed into the body. His observant eye beheld, and his pious heart deplored, the evils which threatened the overthrow of the churches. Instantly he resolved to plead for reformation—not that *pseudo-reformation*, which, under the guise of zeal for the "ancient gospel," robs religion of its vitality and glory—but reformation of heart, of life, and of discipline. In the pulpit and with the pen, he laboured, indefatigably and faithfully, to impart correct views of church discipline, and to elevate the standard of ministerial intelligence and piety.

Mr. Clopton furnished two circular letters for the association: one, on "Church Discipline," was published in 1824; and the other, on "Ministerial Ordination," in 1827.

These admirable productions, especially the first, were reprinted, and extensively circulated in various parts of the United States. Their influence in the association was most salutary. They contain sentiments so just, appropriate, and weighty, expressed in a style so perspicuous and strong, that, but for their length, they should be inserted entire. The subjoined extracts will furnish some idea of their merit.

Having shown, in the "Circular on Church Discipline," that the directory given by our Lord in Matt. xviii. relates to personal and private offences, and that notorious and gross offenders should be dealt with in a more summary and rigorous manner, he proceeds,

"Let us inquire, What are the chief ends of Church Discipline?

"1. And, in the first place, it is intended for the benefit or recovery of the transgressor. The apostle expressly states, that the incestuous person must be expelled from the Corinthian church, 'that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.'

"And in this he differs very widely from those *wise* men of the present day, who seem

to think that the expulsion of an offender from the church is tantamount to *taking his life.* Paul, however, commands the church to excommunicate the transgressor, as the only suitable means of showing him his awful guilt. Because, if any thing is calculated to bring an offending *Christian* to reflect seriously upon the heinous nature of his transgression, it must be a declaration by the church, that they consider him as unworthy of a seat amongst them. In this, if he be a Christian, will he discover the extent and feel the burden of his guilt. Here he will see, as in a glass, the stigma which his conduct has brought upon his character—the high privileges he has forfeited—and the awful doom which must await him, should he persist in his sinful course. Thus Paul, like a skilful surgeon, knowing the disease of the offender at Corinth was almost incurable, by one bold, vigorous stroke reached the core of moral corruption, arrested the infection, and saved the patient. For we learn from his second epistle, written to the same church, about twelve months afterwards, that the offender, low as he had sunk in turpitude

and spiritual apathy, was, by means of his expulsion, roused from his slumber, and quickened to a lively sense of his guilt and misery. And after the church had thus evinced, by his excommunication, that they would 'have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;' and when, after a uniform and long continued reformation, the offender had given evidence that his was that 'godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation that needeth not to be repented of,' Paul directs them to restore him to fellowship.

"Let it be carefully remembered, however, that the church at Corinth was reared up in the midst of abominable idolatries, where iniquity prevailed, in ten thousand forms, and to the very highest degree; so that even where grace reigned in the conversion of the inhabitants, an instantaneous and entire change from all remains of these enormities could not be expected. It must, therefore, be admitted, that, under these circumstances, a laxity of church discipline was tolerated, and, in some sense, expedient, which would be altogether inexpedient and

unjustifiable amongst us. For it can hardly be supposed that any real gospel church, 'built upon the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,' would, at the present day, receive again into fellowship, at the expiration of one year, *if ever*, an offender of like description with him at Corinth.

"Nevertheless, the example serves admirably to demonstrate the propriety, efficacy, and absolute necessity of prompt, decisive, close, apostolic discipline in the church. It very clearly evinces, that not only the offender but the whole church participated in its salutary influence. For when they received the apostle's reproof for suffering the offender to remain among them, their eyes were opened to the guilt of their own conduct, and their hearts were filled with sorrow, indignation, and revenge, not against the offender, but against themselves. 'For, behold,' says Paul, 'this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea

what zeal, yea what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.'

"'He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches:' 'Purge out, therefore, the old leaven.'

"2. Another end of church discipline is the purity, and consequently, the real interest, prosperity, and comfort of the church. While Achan's crime remained concealed, and himself continued in the camp of Israel, the Israelites fled before their enemies—the frowns of Jehovah filled them with dismay, and numbers perished under his sore displeasure. But as soon as he was detected, and punished according to his crime, the wrath of God ceased to smoke against his people, and victory crowned their arms. And thus it is, in no small degree, in the church of Christ. While disorderly, ungodly professors are suffered to remain *quietly* in the church, saying, 'I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart to add drunkenness to thirst,' the minister's hands hang down, and his knees are feeble—the 'word of God' no longer 'proves

quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword,' but falls 'like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,' and becomes a 'savour of death unto death' to sinners.

"By habitual converse with those of lax principles and profligate morals (for the two are closely allied) even Christians themselves, before they suspect their danger, may begin to conform to their maxims and manners. 'Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separated, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.' Disorderly, ungodly professors are among real Christians in the church, like the firebrands between the tails of Samson's foxes. Their conduct continually tends to alienate and separate those who would otherwise live in mutual love, peace, and Christian fellowship. For the best of Christians may, by reason of the imperfection belonging to all, be seduced by the worst of hypocrites in the church, to connive at their transgressions and screen them from punishment. And in this way they prove as 'the firebrands' — the dear disciples are wounded—envy, strife, and every evil work prevails among them. The

hours which would otherwise be devoted to prayer, praise, preaching and hearing God's word, are employed in the examination of witnesses and heart-burning altercations. Consequently, the purity, the interest, prosperity and comfort of the church require the immediate expulsion of all who do not give evidence that they are born of God. Remove the firebrands and the contention will cease. 'Purge out therefore the old leaven.'

"Again—whatever prevents the admission of unworthy members, promotes the purity, the interest, prosperity and comfort of the church. And as wholesome, equitable laws are always odious to the unprincipled part of the community, so nothing is so formidable to false professors as close apostolic discipline—nothing so odious as heart-searching, *practical* preaching. Real believers love the truth, and esteem the yoke of Christ easy and his burden light: but false professors, scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, most esteem that preaching and that discipline which allow them the greatest latitude in their conduct: and this is what *they* call gospel liberty. Consequently, such characters are not apt to seek for admis-

sion into a church, where the true gospel is preached, and true discipline maintained.

"On the contrary, where these are disregarded, or attended in a very imperfect, partial manner, there the church will swarm with those who will not 'endure sound doctrine,' but swallow greedily 'damnable heresies.' There will be those 'who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness' and 'despise government'—there will be found those who betray the Saviour with a kiss, and 'who crucify him afresh and put him to open shame'—there will be seen 'the dog returning to his vomit,' 'and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.' 'Purge out therefore the old leaven.'

"3. Another very important end in church discipline is, to keep the character of the church unblemished in the estimation of unbelievers. If disorderly professors are suffered to remain in the church, it excites, in the minds of unbelievers, a strong prejudice against religion. For though 'the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God,' yet almost every one can discover whether or not a man's conduct corresponds

with his profession. When, therefore, unbelievers see professors retained in Christian fellowship, whose lives vary so much from the Scripture character of saints; the natural principles of their unbelief are greatly strengthened, and they are ready to conclude that there is no reality in religion; or that almost all who profess it are designing hypocrites. It was this mournful consideration that drew from our Saviour the exclamation: 'Wo unto the world because of offences! it must needs be that offences come: but wo unto that man by whom the offence cometh.' It is evident, that in these words he had reference to those false professors whose ungodly lives prejudice others against his truth, and cause them to blaspheme his holy name. And it may be asserted, without the fear of contradiction, that if Voltaire, Hume, Gibbon, and Paine, have, by their infidel writings, murdered thousands of souls; the Achans, Ahithophels, and Judases, in the visible church, have slain their millions.

"On the other hand, nothing perhaps presents to the mind of the unbeliever so strong an argument for the reality of religion as the

sight of a well-organized, well-disciplined, gospel church—constantly and zealously attending upon the ordinances—moving forward, consistently, harmoniously, and affectionately, in the faithful discharge of their various secular and religious duties. When all the members are seen thus maintaining a character, public and private, comporting with their high vocation—denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; pursuing and practising 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;' then is the church 'fair as the moon, beautiful as Tirzah, and terrible as an army with banners.' Such an exhibition of real and consistent virtue, reflecting in some degree the image of its Divine original, cannot fail to impress the mind of the unbeliever with awe—constrain him to bow, at least in his heart, with reference to the supremacy of its influence—and to exclaim, in the language of Baal's worshippers when Elijah's God displayed his presence and his power, 'The

Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God.'"

The circular on "Ministerial Ordination" is founded on the apostolic injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." The writer presents a luminous exposition of the qualifications of a bishop, (enumerated, 1 Tim. iii. 2—7,) and thus proceeds:—

"It shall be our next object to state some reasons why the injunction, 'lay hands suddenly on no man,' should be uniformly and scrupulously obeyed.

"In the first place, nothing is better suited to produce low views of the ministerial character and office of an elder, than premature ordination. Example exerts a mighty influence in every department of human life; and, perhaps, in none more than in the ministry. If, therefore, a man be ordained an elder, whose qualifications are known to fall below those required by apostolic authority; if, for example, his knowledge be superficial, barely sufficient to puff him up, instead of giving weight to his ministrations; then, of course, his ordination will be regarded by succeeding

candidates as an authoritative precedent. To reach his stature in knowledge and ministerial deportment, will be their highest aim: and when they suppose they attain to an equality with him, they will, in spite of any scriptural authority upon the subject, become impatient for their own ordination, demand it as a right, and deem themselves not only injured, but insulted, if the honour be denied them. This may be the chief, if not the only, procuring cause, why so many claim the character and aspire to the office of elders, who are the merest babes in biblical knowledge; and who nevertheless seem perfectly satisfied with their scanty attainments. That this is the natural tendency of that system which winks at, and encourages the ordination of unqualified men is a truth so palpable that to insist upon it would be vain. And that such a system has been, and must still be, wherever pursued, the prolific source of incalculable mischiefs to the church, is a fact equally indubitable. How strong then the motive, here suggested, for a scrupulous attention to the injunction, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man.

"2. Premature ordination, by a natural consequence, unnerves industry and indirectly encourages idleness.

"The student who forms his views of the ministry from the attainment of such as have been *suddenly* thrust into the pastoral office, will be content with the bare prospect of being pronounced competent for the like office by the voice of a similar presbytery. Instead, therefore, of a diligent and prayerful devotion to such a life and such a course of study as might secure scriptural qualifications and a fair prospect of extensive and permanent usefulness in the Lord's vineyard, his time will be devoted now to study—then to pleasure—now to Christ, and again to mammon—and in heart and in life he will more resemble the hireling whose eye is fixed ultimately upon the *fleece*, than the faithful shepherd, who is willing at all times to watch over and feed the flock.

"May we not, in this very circumstance—the facility of procuring ordination by almost any one who *professes* to be called of God to preach—discover the true reason why our newspapers so often teem with the names of

impostors? with the detestable characters and odious vices of these wolves in sheep's clothing? Let, then, the churches of Christ, and especially let those to whom is committed the sacred duty of ordination, take warning and be exhorted to 'lay hands suddenly on no man.'

"3. Those who lay hands suddenly on others without a deep and thorough examination of their principles, motives and character; without giving them time to mature by studious application and experience, become partakers of their sins. They must be accessary, in some sense, to the evils which they bring upon the church and upon themselves.

"Against no characters are there more frequent and fearful denunciations of God's wrath, both in the Old and the New Testament, than faithless ministers—idle shepherds—ignorant, unprofitable, mercenary, and sensual pastors.

"But those who are instrumental in bringing such into the pastoral office, in the neglect and contempt of apostolic authority, with the bare peradventure or hope, that though they do not now possess those qualifications which

God's word points out as essential, they may possibly improve and finally fill up the proper character, do thereby aid in bringing the threatened judgment of God upon them.

"Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, it surely well becomes those who ordain elders to remember the injunction, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man.'

"From these and other considerations we may learn why Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, bears with such mighty urgency upon this subject. He knew that the declarative glory of Christ was involved in the salvation of his people; that the honour and well-being of the church depended upon the reception of the *true* gospel—that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and was profitable—that the ministry would be the chief medium through which the church would receive a knowledge of the Bible—that this instruction would be correct according to the qualifications of the ministry—and that, at the final day, some ministers would shine as the stars in the firmament, while others would be covered with the blackness of darkness for ever and ever.

"He, therefore, enforces upon Timothy the necessity of such a life as might be a fit example for all the flock. He teaches him how to distinguish between true and false doctrine—between the gospel and fables—warns him against false teachers who would, for the sake of filthy lucre, subvert whole houses. He charges him before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of quick and dead, to preach the word; to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine—to watch in all things—to endure afflictions—to do the work of an evangelist—to make full proof of his ministry—and commit the things which he has heard of him among many witnesses to faithful men who would be *able* to teach others also. But for the accomplishment of these interesting objects, he must remain unentangled with the affairs of this world—he must study to approve himself to God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. He must meditate upon these things—he must give himself *wholly* to them. Surely if this instruction was intended for

our benefit; if we have here a true picture of what a minister of Jesus Christ should be, churches and presbyteries can need no additional motives for a strict adherence to the injunction, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man.'"

It will be seen by the following extract from the "Report on the State of the Churches," appended to the minutes of the Appomattox Association for 1832, that the faithful and disinterested efforts of Elder Clopton, and his worthy fellow labourers, who were greatly animated by his example, and assisted by his counsels, were signally successful.

"From the foregoing statement, it appears that nearly one thousand members have been added to our churches during the associational year. And in view of this extraordinary result, the fruit of free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace, in connexion with scriptural, rational means, we may say, 'The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.' But thanks be given to his holy name, it is not the mere increase of number which calls aloud for an expression of our gratitude. In connexion with

the fact are other items not less important, as being the instrumental means partly of that result, which, in its progress, has so often tuned the tongues of saints for praise, and filled the courts of heaven with joy.

"Formerly, some of our ministers were only occasional Sabbath-day preachers; making the ministry a work of secondary consideration. Now, almost all give themselves wholly to the work; or, at least, make it their chief business. Formerly, almost any one could be ordained to the most awfully responsible work of the ministry, who happened to take it into his head that, without gifts or qualifications, he was called of God to preach. Now, it is no easy matter for an unqualified minister to procure ordination. The injunction of the apostle, 'Lay hands suddenly on no man,' is better understood, and more conscientiously regarded.

"In times past, our churches were frequently disgraced and distracted by cases of beastly intemperance. It is believed, that such cases *now* are not more frequent than those of theft. Formerly, most of our ministers, lovers of strong drink themselves,

and fearful of being hard upon others who had transgressed in drinking, lest they too might fall by the same snare, *indirectly* encouraged the sin of intemperance. Now, all the ministers belonging to our association, except two, if we mistake not, are members of temperance societies.

"Formerly, the churches were insensible to the duty and advantage of supporting even a faithful minister. On this subject they were under a thick cloud of prejudice, rendered almost impervious to truth by avarice. Now, several of them have discovered their error; and they believe, that, to deny a faithful minister suitable compensation for his labours of love, is not only to rob him, but God, themselves, and others. They seem not only to believe, but to *feel*, that the apostle makes known the will of God when he says, 'They that *preach* the gospel should *live* of the gospel.' They are as much disposed to render to God that which is his, as to Cæsar that which is due to him. And it is believed that there are now but few ministers any where who are willing to obtain a sickly and short-lived popularity amongst the most igno-

rant, by impugning the motives and traducing the characters of those faithful ministers who barely receive a subsistence in return for their ministerial services. Formerly, a loose, unscriptural discipline, corresponding with the ignorance and unfaithfulness of the minister, was but too apparent in some churches. But now, an improving ministry has elevated the tone of piety, and, in consequence, discipline has advanced towards the scriptural standard. Formerly, every attempt, almost, to improve the ministry in literary attainments, was viewed with a jealous eye, as a cunning design to substitute learning instead of experimental religion, and proper calls from God to preach the gospel. Now, many of those ministers who are destitute of the advantages of a classical education, are so sensible of its importance, that they are willing to improve themselves by all practicable and laudable means, and to aid in word and deed those young ministers who are preparing for so great a work."

It is asserted by one* who was intimately

* Elder P. P. Smith.

acquainted with the subject of this memoir, that his deportment in the association was uniformly courteous and mild. Possessing powerful influence in the body, he wielded it only for the promotion of knowledge, piety, and happiness. If at any time he seemed to be overbearing, a more intimate acquaintance with his motives could not fail to produce a conviction of his integrity and disinterestedness. Long will his brethren of that association remember, with mournful affection, his kind and generous efforts to promote their welfare. Never did a minister share more largely in the cares, conflicts, and sorrows of his brethren than he. His departure opened a chasm in the body not soon to be filled. At its first session after his death, a tender and appropriate tribute was paid to his merit.

It has been already remarked, that Elder Clopton's labours were not confined to the association with which he was connected, but extended over a considerable portion of his native state. When he looked abroad on the desolations of Zion, and the prevalence of sin, his spirit was stirred within him. He

was animated by the true missionary spirit—an earnest longing to preach the gospel in the regions beyond.

We have evidence that his itinerant labours were productive of great good. Several revivals of religion were commenced, and others were greatly promoted, by his faithful and heart-searching ministry. In the summer of 1825, through the instrumentality of himself and other ministers, a glorious reformation began at Powhattan court house, a place which had been famous for irreligion. Several times he visited the village, to fan the flame which he had assisted in kindling. Many in that vicinity gratefully acknowledge him as their father in the gospel.

In June, 1826, returning from the Baptist General Association, in Fredericksburg, Elder Clopton preached in Spottsylvania county very unexpectedly, to fill the appointment of another minister. His text was, "So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; for many be called, but few chosen." (Matt. xx. 16.) The Lord granted him sweet and impressive freedom in speaking. The word spoken had deep, powerful, and general influ-

ence. Saints were awakened to a sense of their responsibility, and filled with gratitude and joy, by a view of the riches and sovereignty of God's grace. Sinners in the anguish of conviction, were constrained to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" The resident ministers were encouraged, meetings for religious exercises were frequently held, and a pleasing reformation ensued.

Toward the close of the year, in compliance with the earnest solicitations of many persons, he again visited the county. This proved to him a season of refreshment, as will appear from the annexed statements taken from his journal. The reader will remember that they were not intended for the public eye.

"During the month of December, (1826,) I travelled and preached through Spottsylvania. This to me has been amongst the most interesting months of my life. I met with a number of persons who dated their first religious impressions under my sermon at brother B.'s, on the fifth of June, 1826. There I beheld Zion arise, or rather risen, and shining in the glorious grace of king Emmanuel.

Within a few months brother B. had baptized upwards of ninety persons: brother H. about eighty: and brother B. about sixty. There I heard the songs of Zion: there I saw mourners: and there I saw many rejoicing in the God of their salvation."

The following graphic and interesting account of a camp-meeting revival, at Winn's Creek Meeting-house, Halifax county, Virginia, is extracted from a communication furnished by Elder Clopton for the "Christian Index," in November, 1831.

"The area of the camp-ground at Winn's Creek is about one hundred yards across. Around its extremity, and in a form somewhat circular, is a considerable number of permanent tents or well-built log cabins in pretty close connexion with each other. These are constructed of such materials as to endure for years to come. In the middle of the area is the stage or pulpit. And in front of this is a space enclosed with posts and rails—divided into two apartments, with seats, for the exclusive use, when needful, of mourners and inquirers. The camp-ground is well supplied with excellent water and in the bosom of a

pious and truly hospitable neighbourhood. Perhaps there are few camp-grounds in America more eligibly situated or more judiciously arranged. To this consecrated spot we repaired on Thursday, 13th October, and continued until the afternoon of the Thursday following.

"To meet the prayers and to dissipate the anxious fears of his people, the Lord gave them during the whole of the time an almost cloudless sky, with an atmosphere bearing on its balmy wings, health, comfort, and peace: while by night, the moon in serene majesty poured her mild rays upon the worshippers, and added a thousand new charms to the sweet songs of Zion. The prayers of the saints were offered almost incessantly at the mercy seat, and the gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And the Lord was pleased to display his free and sovereign grace in the salvation of his chosen. It was indeed a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—such a one as the writer of these remarks never before witnessed—never before experienced. It is im-

possible to form a correct estimate of the good effected. It is believed, however, that, according to the most moderate calculation, not less than fifty persons professed a good hope through grace, and that, at the termination of the meeting, not less than one hundred and fifty occupied the places of mourners."

It may not be improper to remark in this place that Mr. Clopton maintained amidst his incessant labours, an extensive correspondence with religious men. His advice was often sought, on matters pertaining to the kingdom of God, and was always communicated frankly and freely. He wrote letters with great facility; and even those on worldly business breathed a spirit of piety.

It may with great propriety be affirmed of Mr. Clopton, that he belonged to the denomination. His property, tongue, and pen were all employed incessantly to promote its interests. The care of all the churches was upon him. He saw and lamented the prevalence of evils among them, and sought tenderly, faithfully, and diligently to remove them. His sympathies and efforts were not confined

to the Baptist denomination. He was a lover of good men and good things. He rejoiced in the promotion of truth and piety among every sect, and in every land.

CHAPTER VI.

Containing an account of Mr. Clopton's efforts for the suppression of Campbellism—His zeal for the truth—Mr. Campbell's introduction to eastern Virginia—Gradual developement of his system—Elder Clopton opposes it from the pulpit and the press—Extracts from his "Review of Campbellism"—Distinguishing sentiments of Mr. Campbell—Remarks.

If we would judge fairly of the merit of any man we must view his conduct in the various circumstances in which he is placed. We have contemplated Mr. Clopton as an affectionate and laborious pastor—as a zealous and successful preacher; we must now view him as a vigilant and faithful watchman on the walls of Zion.

He did not belong to that class of ministers, who, through excessive liberality, would annihilate the distinction between truth and error. Knowing that truth, and not falsehood, sanctifies the heart, he could never look with toleration on the sentiment, "It matters not what a man believes, if his life be right." Deeply impressed with the importance of the evange-

lic doctrine, he contended for it earnestly, though not always, perhaps, discreetly. Toward Christians differing with him on minor points he exercised great forbearance; but when the vital principles of Christianity were attacked by deluded or designing foes, or the peace of the churches was in danger by aspiring innovaters, he was first to perceive, and foremost to repel the danger. Popularity, friendship, and ease he was willing to sacrifice on the altar of truth. To his independent and dauntless efforts to arrest the influence of the sentiments usually styled "Campbellism" the Baptist churches in Virginia are deeply indebted.

Mr. Alexander Campbell was first introduced to the Baptists in eastern Virginia, in the autumn of 1825. His visit had been preceded by his "Debate on Baptism." This interesting work, containing an able defence of our peculiar sentiments on that ordinance, procured for its author a cordial reception among our churches. His manners were courteous, and his preaching novel and attractive. It was early perceived that he maintained opinions at variance with those which had

been long cherished by the denomination. It was hoped, however, that these objectionable sentiments would be gradually softened, and ultimately removed, by free, full, and friendly discussion. This hope was disappointed.

The "Christian Baptist," a small periodical, which Mr. Campbell edited and published, was from various motives extensively patronised. In this his religious system was slowly, cautiously, and artfully developed. Sentiments which would at first have been rejected with horror, were gradually instilled into many. The seeds of discord and strife were widely scattered among the churches.

Mr. Clopton early saw the approach of danger. In his journal for 1827, he writes: "I had been induced by reading the 'Debate on Baptism,' between Campbell and M'Calla, to subscribe for the little periodical, published by the former, under the title of the 'Christian Baptist.' I was much struck, when I first began to read it, with the bold and daring spirit, and the critical acumen of its author. But the more I read it the more I became convinced that the doctrines which he teaches are exceedingly pernicious."

Elder Clopton immediately commenced a decided, bold, and uncompromising opposition to the new doctrines. Their dangerous and disorganizing tendency he clearly exposed in the pulpit and in private circles. The Appomattox Association, mainly through his influence, adopted resolutions, in 1830, disapproving the peculiar sentiments of Mr. Campbell; and recommending the churches to discountenance his writings, and ministers advocating his singular tenets. By many these measures were deemed harsh and repulsive: the timid —the over-prudent were startled. Mr. Campbell predicted, with all the confidence of inspiration, that the "Appomattox Decrees," as he was pleased to style the resolutions, would greatly augment his influence, and swell the number of his proselytes. But this prophecy has not been fulfilled. Time has evinced the wisdom of the resolutions. The churches of this body early perceived, what other churches learned slowly, and by painful experience, that the most effectual way to resist "Campbellism," or any other specious heresy, is to meet it with decision and energy at the first onset. The forbearance of other

associations and churches involved them in fresh dissensions and perplexities; and they were ultimately compelled to follow the example of Appomattox.

It was not in the pulpit only that Mr. Clopton laboured for the suppression of the rising heresy. In a series of communications, which appeared in the Christian Index, he combatted some of the prominent errors of Mr. Campbell. Elder Clopton was not gifted in controversy. He was frequently impelled, by an ardent temperament, to employ expressions, which, if just, were repulsive, and likely to defeat his purpose. It is true he might have plead in vindication of his course the example of his antagonist, whose writings abounded with bitter denunciations and opprobrious epithets. But he should not have been competitor for a superiority which was neither attainable nor desirable. In addition to this, his censures were frequently indiscriminate. The work which he reviewed contained dangerous errors, rendering it needless to criticise unimportant sentences. His pieces, however, were not without merit. They displayed considerable range of thought and research;

and presented some forcible arguments, clear illustrations, and pungent appeals. It is believed they contributed much to arrest the spread of Mr. Campbell's disorganizing theories.

The following extract, from the seventh number of Mr. Clopton's "Review of Campbellism," is presented as a specimen of his polemic talent. The remarks were in refutation of the sentiments of the ensuing quotations from the "Christian Baptist."

"Whether a man can believe, i. e. imbibe the electing principle, is never answered in the Holy Scriptures for this substantial reason—it is never asked. This is an unlearned question of modern divinity, (that is, of devilty, if such a word or thing there be,) and could be agitated only by fools and philosophers; *all the world knowing that we* MUST BELIEVE *what is proved.*" Christian Baptist, vol. vi. p. 231.

"We rejoice to *know* that it is just as easy to believe and be saved as to hear or see." Christian Baptist, vol. v. p. 221.

"REMARKS.—It is taken for granted that the terms believe and faith, in the Creed, are

intended to convey the idea of a saving faith, in contradistinction to a dead or merely speculative faith. That there is a dead or merely speculative faith, as well as a living or saving faith, is abundantly manifested from the Scriptures. And let it be carefully remembered, that the difference between a living, experimental and saving faith, and that which is dead or merely speculative, does not consist in different objects of faith, or in different facts and truths relating to different objects; but in the different manner in which the same object, facts and truths are understood and apprehended by those who exercise these different kinds of faith.

"Devils, as well as men in a state of nature, are capable of speculative religious knowledge, and of speculative faith, in a very high degree. Mark i. 23, 24: 'And there was in their synagogues a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I *know* thee, who thou art—the Holy One of God.' Now, Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God, is the proper object of saving

faith. A true, spiritual, experimental belief of this truth, is the foundation of the Christian's hope for glory, immortality and eternal life. But this one fact or truth is known and of course believed, in a certain manner, by devils. But if this fundamental fact or truth, in the Christian religion, be known, believed, and confessed, in a certain manner, by devils; may not the same fact or truth be known, believed, and confessed by men in a state of nature, who never believe to the saving of the soul. James ii. 19: 'Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble.'

"In contrasting a dead or speculative faith with a living or saving faith the apostle has these words. James ii. 26: 'As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' 'But shall it be understood from this, that speculative faith is attended by *no* kind of works? Far from it. This kind of faith may, and often does, abound in dead works. Grapes may not be expected from thorns nor figs from thistles; but the thorn is not less prolific than the vine or the fig tree after its own kind. Thus many of the Isra-

elites who perished in the wilderness knew and believed speculatively the will of God so as, in many instances, to yield external obedience to his commands.

"Thus also it is said of Simon Magus, Acts viii. 13: 'Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized he continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.' Under the influence of his faith in the facts and truths preached by Philip concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, Simon forsook his sorceries, confessed the Lord Jesus with his mouth, and owned him by submitting to the ordinance of baptism. His subsequent declaration, however, in proposing to purchase with money the gifts of the Holy Spirit, proved that his faith, followed as it was by external obedience, left him, where speculative faith must leave all its subjects, in the bond of iniquity and the gall of bitterness. Jesus the Nazarene was the object of his faith. He had his own peculiar views of the object, and of the facts and truths relating to him. But the plant of his faith sprung up—it grew—it blossomed—it withered—it

perished—in nature's garden. And I am altogether under a misapprehension, if this be not the kind, and the only kind of faith, though it claims the character and privileges of the true faith, which is taught in the creed. Its author thinks it very hard that this construction should be put upon his words, after all his elaborate exertions to convince the church and the world that he is one of the best and wisest, if not the best and wisest Christian in it. But however easy it may be for him and his adherents to believe the testimony of God, and that he himself is all he professes to be, others find it very difficult to believe his testimony. His declaration in the creed, that it is as easy for men, just as they are, or otherwise in a state of nature, when they hear the gospel, to believe, as it is to believe the well-attested facts concerning the person and achievements of General Washington, affords, according to my judgment, strong evidence that speculative faith is the only kind of faith with which he is acquainted. It is evident, that the belief of such facts is an exercise of the understanding perfectly natural, purely intellectual, and does

not require any particular moral disposition or feeling of the heart, any more than is needful in believing the proposition that London is in England, or that two and two make four. He who is in the daily practice of known, deliberate sin—who rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue—and who is resolved to continue in his course of iniquity, is just as capable of believing the biography of Washington as the most holy man upon earth. These facts, however odious in his view, and opposed to his personal interest, would be as palpable and as convincing to an Arnold, labouring under the influence of avarice, and of treason, as to the best American patriot, breathing after liberty. But will it be maintained by the advocates of the creed, that saving faith in the Son of God, a cordial reception of the facts and truths of the gospel, requires no peculiar state of moral feeling in the heart? That the contrary is true, to me appears manifest, from a variety of testimonies in the Scriptures. If the creed be true, then the following passage is to me perfectly incomprehensible. John xii. 37—40: 'But though he had done so many miracles

before them, yet they believed not on him. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake: Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they *could not* believe, because that Esaias said again: He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' Jesus of Nazareth professed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners. To confirm his pretensions, he healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and raised the dead. On the reception of him, according to his true character, depended their salvation from the wrath to come; for it is written: He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Yet these persons described by Esaias did not believe on him: yea, it is said they *could not* believe on him. They must have believed the miracles wrought by him. These they could not deny, for they

had the evidence of their senses. But the natural inference, the proper conclusion, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, they *could not* admit. Though he spake as man never spake—though his miracles were uniformly characterized by the most undeniable benevolence, they found it easier to ascribe all he said and did, in confirmation of his mission, to Satanic influence, than to believe the great truth that he was the Son of God. Would it be right to ascribe their unbelief to any defect in the evidence? If so, they were certainly guiltless in their rejection of him. Would it be right to ascribe it to any unsuitableness or incompetency in him to save them? This also, if true, would exculpate them. As well might those Jews who perished for their crimes in the wilderness, have pleaded, that if they reached Canaan, it could not contain them. But it is said, that the blindness of their minds, and the hardness of their hearts constituted their inability, or was the cause of their rejection of the Saviour. The unholy state of their hearts was the true cause. Let it not be supposed, when it is said, that he hath blinded their minds

and hardened their hearts, that God imparted to them any evil or sinful principle or propensity. God cannot deny himself. But as their minds were naturally blind, and their hearts naturally depraved, the whole course of God's providence towards them, as in the case of Pharaoh, and every additional display of his glory before them, in the person of his Anointed, served but to render them more blind to his glory, and to excite more and more the inveterate and desperate malignity of their hearts. From the glorious display of the divinity of Christ in the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, they retired convinced, but not converted, and gave vent to their rage and malice, by holding a consultation to put Lazarus to death; lest through his living testimony others should believe what they most of all things deprecated,—that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Hence, though he was in deed and in truth the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, to them he appeared not only as a root out of dry ground, having no form, comeliness, or beauty, but the most odious of all other beings. Will any one

contend that they could believe as easily as they could hear or see? That they could believe that Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, the Son of God, as easily as they believed the history of the deliverance of their forefathers from Egyptian bondage, their passage through the Red Sea, and their pilgrimage through the wilderness? But if the creed be true—if saving faith be simply the belief of facts, upon human testimony, irrespective of the moral state of the heart, then surely they *could* have believed in one instance as well as the other. And is there not reason to conclude, that there are many such persons wheresoever the gospel is now preached? Where is the minister who may not find, in his own congregation, those who under the full blaze of gospel light, walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, and occupy the seat of the scornful? 'But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

"When the rich young man was required by the Saviour to sell his possessions for the benefit of the poor, and to follow him, as a prerequisite to his obtaining eternal life, he went away sorrowful because he had large possessions. The Saviour remarked on the occasion, that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But if the creed be true, then the Saviour must have been mistaken; for all will acknowledge that it is as easy for the rich as for the poor man to believe the well-attested facts concerning Washington, and consequently it must be as easy for him to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It is easy to discover from the context, that the difficulty of salvation to the young man consisted in his inordinate attachment to his worldly possessions. It was congenial with his nature to love them, and to trust in them as a source of pleasure and happiness. But for the unfelt, the unknown joys, arising from an experimental knowledge of Christ and him crucified, he had no taste, no relish. His idolatrous fondness for his possessions

hid from him the glory of Christ, and excluded him from the enjoyment of eternal life.

"Nor need we be surprised at the declaration of the Saviour, when we consider the common influence which wealth exerts on the human heart in exciting the pride of life, in augmenting man's predisposition to self-sufficiency, in removing him far from the common means of grace, or in rendering them ineffectual when possessed. But if, according to the creed, it be as easy to believe and be saved, as to believe the well-attested facts concerning Washington; and if, as all will admit, the rich can believe these as easily as the poor man; then it will follow, that the rich man can enter into the kingdom of heaven as easily as he can believe Washington's biography.

"Among other declarations of the Saviour, which appear directly opposed to the creed, the following also may be noticed. Luke xiii. 24: 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' But where can be the difficulty of entering in, if it be as

easy to believe and be saved, as it is to see or hear? Did ever any one seek to know and believe the well-attested facts concerning Washington without being able to accomplish his desires? Is it possible to conceive, that a man can be so situated, if in full possession of his rational powers, as to be unable to believe these facts, when suitably proposed to him? If he be swelled with pharisaical pride and self-sufficiency; or if he be sunk to the lowest grade of human depravity and infamy; if he be saying, with the fool, in his heart, There is no God; or, What is the Almighty that I should serve him? or, What profit shall I have if I pray unto him? or if he be trembling on the verge of eternity, with fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation; still, as the belief of these facts is an exercise purely intellectual, irrespective of holiness in the heart, he must be capable of believing them. But the Saviour urges upon his hearers the necessity of *agonizing;* of putting forth all their powers; of cutting off the right hand; of plucking out the right eye; of denying themselves; of taking up their cross; if peradventure by *any* means they might enter

in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way of holiness unto life eternal. And he enforces his injunction by the solemn consideration, that *many* will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Now if he were acquainted with the creed, and *believed* it, why should he torture his hearers and the feeble-minded of future ages with needless ground of alarm? But as he well knew what was in man and all the means by which his salvation must be accomplished, it may be justly inferred from the injunction and the consideration by which it is enforced, that he considered entering in at the strait gate, an arduous, up-hill, and an exceedingly difficult business. And why? Because the world, the flesh and the devil, in ten thousand ways, are leagued in opposition. Man naturally loves, pursues, and serves the world—naturally hates and forgets God. To please and gratify the flesh is his constant aim, his supreme delight. He is led captive by the devil at his will. The strong man armed keepeth his palace. So blind is he to the glorious perfections of God—so opposed to his spiritual and holy law—so insensible to his own obligations and to his own danger—so

incapable of understanding the pure, spiritual and holy worship of God—that he is justly represented as dead in trespasses and sins. But can he, without supernatural aid, agonize for deliverance from the love and dangerous snares of the world, which is his god? from the lust of the flesh, in which he finds his chief enjoyment? from the curse of the law, whose obligations, as far as he understands them, he hates? from the guilt and dominion of sin, for which he never mourned in all the bitterness of a broken heart? Can he who glories in his own knowledge, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, glory at the same time, and that without supernatural aid, in the cross of Christ? By reference, however, to the eleventh chapter of Paul's letter to the Hebrews, and to many other passages of Scripture, it may be seen, that all these difficulties, all these obstacles to salvation, or to an entrance in at the strait gate, are made to yield to the influence or control of that faith which is 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' The Saviour declares that all things are possible to them that believe. Now if all things be pos-

sible to them that believe, and if, according to the creed, it be as easy for men in a state of nature to believe and be saved, as it is for them to believe the well-attested facts concerning Washington; nay more, if Mr. Campbell, as he unequivocally declares in his creed, rejoices to *know*, that it is as easy to believe and be saved as it is to hear or see; then it must of necessity follow, that he knows it (ah! and that by *experience* too) to be as easy to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and enter in at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way of holiness, as it is to hear or see. And consequently, this man, in this age of wonders, has discovered a way leading to heaven, unknown to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to the prophets, apostles, and to him who emphatically says, *Agonize* to enter in at the strait gate: for *many*, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be *able*. Is this the 'ancient gospel?' Are these the weapons which are to prove mighty to the pulling down of the strong holds of error, superstition, heathenism and idolatry; introduce the millennium; and establish universally, 'the ancient order of things?'"

The question is often asked, "What are the distinguishing sentiments of Mr. Campbell?" It seems difficult for his opponents to furnish a satisfactory answer to this inquiry. Campbellism, chameleon-like, presents a different hue to almost every beholder. Whether Mr. Campbell has expressed his thoughts obscurely, or his opponents are unwilling to represent them fairly, we need not decide. We must, however, at the risk of incurring the charge of misrepresentation, endeavour to gratify this reasonable curiosity. We shall not intentionally do him, or his sentiments, injustice. We will permit him to speak for himself. On three important points Mr. Campbell differs from Christians generally, and in our humble opinion, from the Holy Scriptures. He maintains,

I. *That the influence of the Holy Spirit is not necessary in the production of saving faith.*

"Can men just as they are found when they hear the gospel, believe? We answer, boldly, yes; just as easily as we can believe the well-attested facts concerning the person and achievements of General George Wash-

ington." Christian Baptist, vol. vi. p. 187. The reader may consult the quotations from the same work on a preceding page.

II. *That immersion is the regenerating act.*

"In the moral fitness of things in the evangelic economy, baptism, or immersion, is made the first act of a Christian's life, or rather the regenerating act itself; in which (that is, in immersion) the person is properly born again —born of water and spirit—without which into the kingdom of heaven he cannot enter. No prayers, no songs of praise, no acts of devotion, in the new economy, are enjoined on the unbaptized." Christian Baptist, vol. v. p. 223.

III. *That sins are remitted, and the Holy Spirit is received only in the act of immersion.*

"That by the mere act of a believing immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are born again, have all our sins remitted, receive the Holy Spirit, and are filled with joy and peace. Baptism is the only medium divinely appointed, through which the efficacy of the blood of Christ is

applied to the conscience. Without knowing and believing this, immersion is as empty as a blasted nut." Christian Baptist, vol. v. p. 213; vol. vi. p. 187.

It is not our purpose to discuss these singular tenets: the reader is requested to examine them for himself in the light of the Scriptures. That the depravity of the heart presents no barrier to the reception of the gospel: that regeneration is the immersion of the body in water: and that a penitent believer is unpardoned, and destitute of the Holy Spirit, until he is immersed, are sentiments which must appear novel to one whose creed is the word of God.

Mr. Campbell has great horror of *sectarianism*. And truly its prevalence ought to be deplored. He considers all *religious sects* as involved in the smoke, and guilt, and curse of Babylon. And it cannot be fairly denied that the best of them have much remaining ignorance and sin. He proposes to melt down these anti-Christian bodies, (by the fire of disputation it would seem,) and to form a great church embracing his peculiar creed, which he assures us is identical with the

doctrine of the New Testament. Well, Christ has taught us to pray for the unity of his church. Now, it is due to Mr. Campbell to acknowledge, that if all religious denominations would renounce their own sentiments, and receive implicitly those promulgated in the Christian Baptist, and the Millennial Harbinger, they might be organized into one great body or sect. Whether it would be the church of Christ, is a question.

CHAPTER VII.

Elder Clopton's efforts in the temperance reform—Causes of his abandoning the use of spirits—Annual temperance society formed—Mr. Clopton conceives the plan of the Virginia Temperance Society—Society formed at Ash Camp—Extract from circular address—From Mr. Clopton's journal—Great excitement produced—Mr. Clopton's constant efforts—Character of his temperance addresses—Anniversary meetings of society—Success of society—Tribute to Mr. Clopton's memory.

The history of Mr. Clopton's efforts in the temperance reform is entitled to a prominent place in this volume. He professes the undisputed honour of having originated the "Virginia Temperance Society."

When Elder Clopton removed to Charlotte he found the churches much infested by the sin of drunkenness. He commenced immediately a war of extermination against it. In his public addresses, and in his private conversation, he exposed, with great severity, the guilt, odiousness, and consequences of the vice. At this period he used ardent spirit very moderately; but trembled lest he should be seduced by the destroyer, knowing, in that

event, that his bold and uncompromising opposition to the sin would exclude him from a participation in the common sympathy for the guilty.

In a letter to his father as early as May, 1824, he remarks, "The trials which I have lately had"—alluding to difficulties in one of his churches caused by a drunken member—"will I hope serve to put me on my guard; and a new case of intemperance (a female) has occurred that makes me almost afraid to drink spirits. You will be surprised. And now, if, after all my preaching and zeal against this ruinous vice, I should be overtaken! how awful must be my condition!"

For the following interesting statement of the events which led to his abandoning entirely the use of ardent spirits as a drink, the compiler is indebted to Elder John Hubbard, one of Elder Clopton's most intimate friends.

"I have often heard Mr. Clopton relate the causes which induced him to abandon the practice of drinking ardent spirit. In the summer of 1825, he became intimate with a young minister,* who conscientiously re-

* Elder Daniel Witt.

frained from the prevalent, but insidious and dangerous custom. He approved and admired, but did not instantly imitate, this self-denial. He was, however, soon brought to a decision. While sitting one day at dinner he was informed that a female, of respectable connexions, with whom he had been well acquainted, and for whom he had entertained high esteem, had been carried home from a distillery in a state of beastly intoxication. He was astounded. Dropping his knife and fork he resolved, instantly and solemnly, to use ardent spirit no more."

This event transpired, it is likely, near the beginning of 1826, for shortly after this time he wrote to his father: "There are several things with which I will have nothing to do except through necessity—suretyship, *ardent spirits*, negroes, tobacco, and politics."

The American Temperance Society was organized early in the year 1826, but information of its existence had not reached Mr. Clopton when he conceived the plan of the Virginia Temperance Society. No person, it is believed, who assisted in its formation,

was apprized of the existence of any similar institution. It is a singular and interesting coincidence that two societies having in view the same object, and adopting the same means to attain it, should have been originated in the same country, and in the same year, without concert. It marks the interposition of a beneficent Providence; and shows that the temperance reform originated, not in blind and capricious fanaticism, but in sound deliberation on the best means of arresting the ravages of intemperance.

"The plan of this society," Mr. Clopton writes in his journal, "was first conceived in my mind early in the spring of 1826; and I disclosed my views to brethren W. J. and C.; and then to brethren B. and F., as we returned from the general association, in Fredericksburg. O, that I could praise and adorn, in some degree as I ought, the Lord Jehovah, in that he put it into my heart, (and I trust that he and not Satan did inspire the thought of doing good,) to devise means to arrest the current of intemperance."

The following extract is taken from a letter

addressed by Mr. Clopton to his aged father, just before the organization of the temperance society.

"Now in regard to our contemplated temperance society I will make a few remarks. It has raised already a good deal of excitement, especially among the Baptists in one of the adjoining counties. Two ministers have arrayed themselves against it, if I have been correctly informed. And I am unable to say whether we can form a society or not. Some suppose that I shall soon destroy that influence which I now have. But I think my congregations increase in number. My prayer is, daily, that I may, through grace, obtain and exercise the wisdom that is from above. While I am regarded as one of those whose aim is to turn the world upside down, I need abundantly the unerring influences of the Holy Ghost. If we should form a society I will send you a copy of our minutes as soon as they may be published. I have reason, it appears to me, to be thankful above almost all others for the unspeakable goodness of the Lord towards me. For three weeks past, I think I have enjoyed the sweet comforts of

religion, perhaps more than in any period of my life before."

In conformity with a previous notice, several ministers convened, with a large congregation, at Ash Camp Meeting House, Charlotte county, on Friday, 27th of October, 1826, for the purpose of organizing a temperance society. Elder Eli Ball preached an appropriate sermon. A constitution, certain resolutions, and a circular address, having been previously prepared by Elder Clopton, were presented, and, after careful examination, and a few slight alterations, were on the following day adopted. They are original and interesting productions of a benevolent and vigorous mind. It is surprising that the organization, even in its infancy, should have been so simple and efficient, as to have left but little to be added by the united wisdom and experience of its numerous and enlightened friends.

The following article is that which prescribed the terms of membership.

"Any sober person, whether a member of a church or not, who will consent to abstain from the habitual use of spirituous liquors,

and use them as a medicine only, and, provided he be the head of a family, will enforce the same rule upon his children and domestics, may become a member of this society."

After a stirring appeal in behalf of the cause, only ten persons, eight of whom were ministers, signed the pledge. At the close of the business Elder Clopton addressed the members of the infant institution, in a most animating and pathetic strain, "encouraging them to faithfulness and perseverance, in consideration of the great and important work before them—and of the public and solemn vow into which they had entered. They felt as a band of brothers—united by new, additional ties—and endeared by new considerations."

The ensuing remarks are taken from the circular, written by Mr. Clopton, and published by the society. They evince the ability and ardour with which this apostle of temperance commenced his unpopular ministry.

"But to parents, especially, the natural guardians of the rising generation, we offer the following remarks:—

"Can you, beloved friends, while witnessing

the destructive ravages made upon society by the intemperate use of spirituous liquors, remain inattentive to the best interests of your children? While you behold the most promising talents of our country withering under the blasts of this moral pestilence—while you see the besotted husband deaf to the entreaties of his affectionate spouse, and unmoved by the cries and tears of his beggared children—the ungrateful prodigal, profusely prostituting the fruits of a parent's industry to the low, the brutal pleasures of the bottle and the brothel—while you see honour, character, friends and prosperity, all sacrificed upon this unhallowed altar, and remember, too, that for all these things, God will bring the drunkard into judgment; will you not be persuaded to adopt, in regard to your rising offspring, such a course of instruction and discipline, as may promise the most effectual safeguard against these evils?

"And for this all-important end, we venture to assure you, that eaxmple is the great desideratum.

"Let your children, then, often hear, from your lips, and constantly read in your lives,

that you consider drunkenness, not only as a brutal departure from rationality, but a heinous sin against a holy God; and not only an abominable sin in itself, but often the prolific parent of many other crimes. And let them see and know that you view the habitual use of spirituous liquors as the most easy, least suspected, and most certain introduction to the hateful vice.

"Therefore, by your conduct, evince to them that you use it, if you use it at all, not as an ordinary mean of exciting an unnatural and voracious appetite, but as a cordial for the faint and weary, a medicine for the diseased.

"Let them often hear and know, from unquestionable evidence, that you regard tippling-shops, and the places of drunkenness, as traps for the unwary spendthrift; as hot-beds of vice; nurseries of disease; and as the broad road to poverty, reproach, infamy, and eternal death. Impress upon their tender minds, by seasonable remarks, confirming the impression by your conduct, that, in your apprehension, no natural or acquired talents—elevation of birth, or rank, or station, can hide the horrid

deformity of intemperance, or screen its hapless subject from merited ignominy.

"Point your growing son to the forlorn widow, and to the destitute orphan. Tell him that woman once had a husband, that orphan a father; that he was once temperate, once sober, once affectionate; but that, by the habitual use of strong drink, the infant lust became a giant; that then the comforts of the domestic fireside were exchanged for the brutal pleasures of the grog-shop; and death, with all its consequences, chosen in preference to a life of rational, virtuous sobriety.

"Tell him, and O press the solemn truth upon his heart, that this is only one among ten thousands of victims which people, annually, the prison, the grave, and hell.

"In conclusion, we address a few remarks, separately, to that portion of society which hath not yet been brutalized by intemperance. Listen to our voice, O ye virtuous matrons, who feel a mother's sympathy, who know a mother's love. Do ye desire safety? Do ye desire peace? Do ye desire domestic comfort? Do ye desire happiness in time

and in eternity for your daughters? Teach their infant minds to shrink at the approach of the drunkard, and to shudder at the thought of a union with him. Teach them that it is he who, with ruthless treachery, violates the marriage vow; squanders in taverns and brothels the patrimony he never earned; scattereth firebrands and death, and saith, Am I not in sport? that his is the heart that cannot melt at the voice of love, nor relent at the tears of grief. And O, if ye have so learned the doctrines and precepts of Christ as to know and feel that there is a heaven—that there is a hell, teach them that the drunkard's steps take hold on hell—that he shall drink the wrath of God—for ever—for ever—for ever."

Mr. Clopton's journal for October, 1826, contains the following account of the meeting at Ash Camp.

"I have read more, and prayed more in this month than usual. I have been with a number of brethren in the ministry, and the month is distinguished by the organization of the Virginia Society for the Promotion of Temperance. This society I regard, in some

degree, as a mean of demolishing the kingdom of Satan. O that He, through whose might the walls of Jericho fell at the blast of the rams' horns, may smile upon our attempts to honour him, in doing good to our fellow men. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' O thou eternal and unchangeably glorious Jehovah, who spakest, and it was done, who commandedst, and it stood fast, bless this institution! Amen."

The formation of this society produced an immediate, extensive, and violent excitement. It was, by the lovers of strong drink, viewed as an unrighteous combination against their liberty, and held in contempt. By good men it was contemplated with mingled emotions of suspicion and pity. "Vulgar wit," in the eloquent language of its founder, "the shafts of calumny, of variegated falsehood, and revengeful abuse, were employed to destroy the threatening influence of this new invention."

In April, 1827, Mr. Clopton wrote, "The Temperance Society has offended not a few. Be it so: if there cannot be found sober men enough to support the gospel, the Lord will

send me to the heathen sooner than I shall suffer want. Our society prospers more than we could, perhaps, have anticipated. I feel deeply mortified, however, to learn that men, who, upon the whole, must be allowed to have some claim to the character of Christians, will still honour and patronise the beastly crime of drunkenness. But habit and example are of mighty influence. God Almighty, nevertheless, can pull down, through the influence of the truth, these strong-holds of the devil. I hope I shall live to see the day when it will be thought just as honourable to hold an inhabitant of the —— in fellowship as a drunken professor. I know this will by many be thought a hard saying; but God, in his word, has ranked them together, and what God hath joined let not man put asunder."

On another occasion Elder Clopton wrote: "I look upon a young man, or an old man, in P—, where a popular preacher declaims against temperance societies, in a situation similar to that of Lot in Sodom. I look upon the contest now going on, and advancing, too, beyond all parallel, as far more important to

us as a nation, and as Christians, than the American revolution. Brother *** has taken sides. If his course be more likely to make sober ministers, and sober and happy churches, than mine, may God Almighty speed him in his way. Every man who loves his bottle so well that he cannot let it go, will be likely to fall out with my views, and probably with me. But what of that? I must know no man after the flesh."

Mr. Clopton was not to be diverted from his labours by the sneers of opposers, or the timid suggestions of friends. He had examined thoroughly the cause in which he was engaged. He was deeply convinced, not only that the object sought to be attained was intimately connected with the temporal and eternal welfare of millions, but that the means adopted to gain it were scriptural and efficient. In this benevolent, but unpopular enterprise, he toiled with a zeal which no opposition could damp, a diligence which no difficulties could abate, and a perseverance which time could not diminish. His efforts were for a time almost incessant. As corresponding secretary of the society, he wrote numerous

letters, superintended the printing and circulation of several temperance tracts, and a small volume compiled by himself and Elder Eli Ball, called, "Wisdom's Voice to the Rising Generation." A large proportion of the expense of these publications he defrayed from his own limited resources. He travelled extensively in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, everywhere arousing public attention, diffusing information, refuting objections, confirming the wavering, encouraging the timid, and confounding opponents by his private conversations, and public addresses, on the subject of temperance.

Mr. Clopton's temperance addresses abounded with interesting and striking incidents, which he had collected in his journeys. The following may serve as a specimen. Riding once through a large and fertile farm in Virginia, he remarked to his travelling companion,* "This place was once in possession of a very wealthy gentleman, who gave it to his only son. That son is now a worthless vagabond." He expressed surprise that an estate so ample should have been so soon squandered. Pass-

* Elder John Hubbard.

ing the old deserted mansion, he espied, at the foot of a hill, on a small stream, the ruins of a distillery. "The secret," he exclaimed, "is revealed. The father accumulated wealth by the manufacture of whisky, and the son scattered it by intemperance." A fact like this, submitted to his searching mind, would furnish the basis of the most convincing arguments, the most powerful appeals, and the most withering sarcasm. His temperance addresses produced very different effects on different hearers: some were offended; some amused; some convinced; some distressed; many led to inquiry, and not few to abandon for ever the use of spirituous liquors. The compiler has heard competent judges affirm that his temperance lectures were pre-eminently adapted to interest and profit popular assemblies.

The first anniversary meeting of this society convened at Deep Run church, in Henrico county, on the 28th of September, 1827. Elder Clopton delivered an appropriate sermon. The report states, "The names of one hundred and twenty-three persons are now enrolled as members. Of this number twenty-seven are Baptist ministers; one is a

Presbyterian minister; one an Episcopal minister. Of the whole number fifty-nine are heads of families. 'Upper King and Queen Auxiliary Temperance Society,' the offspring of this day of small things, consists already of one hundred and seven members. The 'Deep Run Temperance Society' contains thirty members, or more. Out of our society have also grown the 'North Anna Society for the Promotion of Temperance,' and the 'North Anna Juvenile Temperance Society.' The members of this last-mentioned society, consisting wholly of youth, have erected a monument of glory to their names. And while they present a noble example to the youth of Virginia, they exhibit, to the host of *juvenile* and *veteran* topers, a contrast as striking and as enviable as that between bravery and cowardice, between chastity and pollution. We would praise and adore the God of all grace for the good already effected. The change, though partial and limited, indeed, in proportion to the extent of the evil, is, nevertheless, in many places very visible; and we trust that, like the little cloud once seen rising out of the sea, it portends a

mighty revolution in sentiment, in taste, in habits, in morals."

The second anniversary meeting of the society was held in Powhattan county, and the third in Fluvanna county. The institution was then slightly amended, and its annual meetings appointed to be held permanently in the city of Richmond. Elder Clopton was not only present at these meetings, but his energy was the main-spring of the machine.

It is not easy to conceive the delight which the unexpected and unexampled success of this society gave to its humane projector. His most sanguine expectations were more than realized.

The following encouraging extract is from a communication received by Mr. Clopton from the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, of the Presbyterian church, dated February, 1830.

"The cause of temperance is indeed one that ought to command the united efforts of every patriot and philanthropist, much more of every follower of Christ. How wonderful has been the progress of that cause! and what fervent gratitude is due to the Author of all good, for the rays of sunshine that are

thus breaking through what a little while ago was one dense, opaque cloud, covering our whole horizon, justifying the most direful apprehensions for our country, and the church of God in this western world!"

It will hardly be denied, by candid and observant men, that the Temperance Society has accomplished great good: light has been extensively diffused; the habits of society, especially of the middle classes, have been manifestly improved; the quantity of ardent spirit consumed has been much diminished; and many drunkards have been reclaimed from their degrading thraldom. It must be conceded, however, that the temperance reform is at this time (1837) making but little progress in Virginia. The apathy and inactivity of its friends, and the unfortunate controversy on the wine question, have darkened a prospect which was but recently bright and encouraging.

This account of Mr. Clopton's efforts in the temperance cause shall be closed by the following just tribute to his memory, taken from an address delivered August 30, 1834, at a temperance meeting, at Charlotte court

house, by A. C. Morton, Esq. This testimony is doubly valuable, coming, as it does, from an elder of the Presbyterian church, residing in the immediate vicinity of Mr. Clopton's residence.

"But who brought the society here?—A native and *true-born* Virginian; a patriot, a philanthropist, a Christian; a man who has left a monument of his usefulness in the hearts of his friends; a man who has done more than any other man in this country to advance the cause of temperance, and, consequently, the moral elevation of his race; a man who fearlessly took up this cause, and, amidst the scoffs and jeers of the multitude, pressed on to a most triumphant vindication of it; and who lived to see glorious fruits resulting from his labours; a man, in short, whose name should be revered and cherished by every friend to temperance and human happiness, to his latest breath, and handed down to posterity as that of the great apostle of temperance among us. Shall I name the late Rev. Abner W. Clopton? Yes, it was he who brought the society into existence here; and at the bare mention of his name every heart that

loves this cause will swell with grateful emotion. And I doubt not that many now unborn will enjoy the fruits of his labour, for his was truly a labour of love. This man was nursed in the lap of republicanism; he loved our institutions, and was no fanatic. He mixed with the people, and knew well what were their habits, and what was the besetting sin of the day. He saw that the devil had let loose upon us a mighty torrent of *ardent spirits*, which had broken down the bulwarks of morality and religion, and he threw himself into the breach. He fought to the last, and won the day; the cause of temperance, having thus obtained a footing in the land, has progressed, is still progressing, and will continue to progress, until that consummation, so ardently to be desired, when all shall entirely abandon the use of ardent spirits. No, Mr. Clopton was not the man to turn loose upon us a wolf in sheep's clothing, neither was he the man to give an alarm where no danger threatened. He saw, I repeat, ardent spirits like a mighty torrent, sweeping before it all that was lovely; bearing away on its bosom virtue, talents, laudable emulation, usefulness,

and even religion. He saw vice, with all its horrors and its loathsomeness, following in its wake, and spreading abroad desolation and hopelessness. Fired by a heavenly zeal for the redemption from its influence of his country, his friends, his church, he interposed his exertions. That awful current turned back; and now the mild spirit of temperance is spreading her cheering influence on all around, and even the angry murmurs of the enemies of the cause are scarcely heard. Such were Mr. Clopton's exertions, and such has been his success; but he has gone to his reward, and many, doubtless, will rise up and call him blessed. Thus may it be with us all! If there is not the same room for our success there was for his, we have at least the same means to deserve it, for much yet remains to be done."

CHAPTER VIII.

Contains an account of Mr. Clopton's labours in behalf of the Columbian College—Early efforts of Virginia Baptists in the cause of education—Account of Columbian College--Its embarrassment--Elder Clopton accepts an agency to Georgia—His labours and successes, in extracts from several letters, and his journal—Returns to Georgia on the agency—Severe conflicts—Extracts from his journal—Incident—Memoir—Appointed general agent—Enters on the duties of the office—Arrested by death—Resolution of board of trustees.

The ministers by whose indefatigable and self-denying labours the first Baptist churches in Virginia were planted, watered, and pruned, were mostly destitute of literary acquirements. Animated by a fervent zeal not always free from enthusiasm; intimately acquainted with the common English version of the Scriptures; possessing, many of them, an easy and impassioned elocution; and relying for success on the Divine blessing, they travelled throughout the state, preaching the gospel with apostolic simplicity and faithfulness. God crowned their labours with signal success. Many were turned from darkness to

light, and from the power of Satan unto God. They saw churches springing up, with almost unexampled rapidity, in places where but recently moral desolation had reigned. These devoted men early saw and acknowledged the necessity of an increase of ministerial intelligence.

As early as 1788, the general committee of the Baptists in Virginia, a body composed of delegates from the associations, appointed a committee of ten members, at the suggestion of the Rev. James Manning, president of Providence College, Rhode Island, to devise means for founding a seminary of learning. A plan for the proposed institution was drawn, and trustees were appointed; but the difficulty of obtaining funds, with some other obstacles, frustrated the laudable scheme. I mention these facts to refute an assertion, widely circulated, and generally believed, that the Baptists of Virginia have always been opposed to education. They have never deemed classical learning essential to success in the gospel; and, doubtless, some among them have undervalued its influence; but they have in general prized it, sought it, and en-

deavoured, under great disadvantages it is admitted, to diffuse its benefits.

Elder Clopton was a uniform, zealous, and disinterested friend of education—especially of ministerial education. Having enjoyed the advantages of collegiate instruction, he knew well its importance. He was incapable of the ignoble ambition of engrossing knowledge, that he might shine the more brightly in the surrounding gloom. He was desirous to impart, like the sun in the firmament, light to all within the sphere of his influence. He lamented, most sincerely, that the noble plans of our fathers had been so long unexecuted.

The estimation in which he held learning, may be seen from the following extract of a letter to a young brother, just entering the Christian ministry:

"The education of the ministry is rising constantly in importance. The land is full of sin, error, and heresies. And many excellent Christians, excellent in degree, are, through prejudice, warring against those things which glorify God, and are profitable to men; and are encouraging those which may well excite our pity. Education can

neither make a Christian or a minister; but it has its place, in the providence of God, in furthering his glory and promoting the happiness of man."

The fervour of Mr. Clopton's zeal for the promotion of literature did not evaporate in empty profession, but led to vigorous and self-denying efforts. A brief account of these labours will now be given. The Columbian College, in the district of Columbia, was founded by the indefatigable exertions of the Rev. Luther Rice, and the munificence of individual Baptists, and others. It was incorporated, by act of congress, in 1821; and in the following year the buildings were so far completed, that a faculty was appointed, and a course of instruction commenced, with cheering prospects of success. For several years it fulfilled the most sanguine expectation of its friends. But every enterprise is attended with difficulty and uncertainty. Owing partly to general pecuniary embarrassment, but mainly to an improvident disbursement of its funds, the college became involved in a heavy debt. In the year 1827, it was likely to be crushed by its pecuniary pressure. It

was deemed important by its friends to make an appeal to the liberality of the public, and of the Baptist denomination particularly. The failure of the college, it was clearly perceived, would be detrimental to the interests of learning in the denomination. Elder Clopton was appointed, by the board of trustees, an agent to collect funds in the state of Georgia. Through the earnest solicitation of Elder R. B. Semple, and other patrons of the institution, he, with much hesitancy, accepted the appointment. In December of that year he started to his field of labour, accompanied by his intimate friend, Mr. John Hubbard. This proved an agreeable and successful agency.

An interesting account of Mr. Clopton's labours, conflicts, successes, and joys is furnished by the following extracts from his letters and journal.

To Elder D. Witt he wrote Jan. 16, 1828:

"On Saturday evening last I arrived at Eatonton. It was my expectation to reach this place at an earlier date; but from Augusta, where I arrived on the 26th December, I found it expedient to go up to Washington, the place of brother M.'s residence, in order

to obtain his counsel and aid. I feel a confident hope that I shall obtain $5000, and I am not without hope that I shall reach $7000. And seeing there never was such a cry of hard times, I am disappointed at the liberality of the dear brethren. Very few, indeed, have refused to contribute; and not a few regret that circumstances prevent them from subscribing more.

"In regard to my preaching, I can say, in deed and in truth, that I seem not to have had liberty since I left home. I am, through necessity, prevented almost altogether from reading; while the subject of the college seizes on my mind with such force, that it wellnigh swallows up every other.

"A most glorious revival has been going on in this state (Georgia) about four months. It is said that near a thousand persons have been baptized. I saw twenty immersed by brother H—— on last Lord's-day, and brother B—— baptized eighteen on the Lord's-day before. But I was only on the outskirts of it. In the course of two or three weeks, I expect, if the Lord will, to enter the midst of the harvest.

'It is a fact worthy to be known, that the benefits of education are becoming more general in this state than in ours. There is a respectable academy, I believe, in almost every county, and, in some, two or three; while in the large and wealthy counties of Halifax and Pittsylvania there is not a solitary academy. Great efforts will no doubt soon be made to educate young ministers. And I do trust the time is not very distant, when more attention will be given to the subject in our own state.

"I have hardly any room to inform you, that in Eatonton, where the brethren have done so much for the college, almost every member of the church is a member of the temperance society; and brother H—— and myself never saw there, during a stay of three days, one drop of spirits; and though it was court-day, we saw not a solitary instance of intemperance. I hate to make invidious comparisons, lest I should offend those nice feeling brethren who cannot join among us."

On the 11th of March he wrote to his father as follows:

"I have just completed the sum of $5000, besides the $1000 obtained before we crossed the Georgia line. This is far beyond my expectation. I now expect to obtain $7500. But, after all, there is some doubt whether the college will be finally sustained. If, however, this should be the fact, I trust I shall finally have no cause to regret our visit to this country; because the Lord has manifestly smiled upon our labours in the ministry. A most glorious revival is going on in many parts; and we can truly say, 'it is good to be here.'

"I preached yesterday, from 2 Cor. iv. 5. Though I had a cold and barren time, the power of the Holy Ghost seemed to be present; and we are encouraged to hope that consequences may be, in some degree, similar to those at the commencement of the revival in Spottsylvania. We have another meeting at the same place on to-morrow. I have had some sweet and solemn seasons, and met with many dear, precious brethren."

In a communication to Elder Witt, dated Eatonton, March 24, he wrote,—

"We have some very interesting seasons

of preaching, and I can truly say, that in case our exertions on behalf of the college should prove finally abortive, we shall ever have reason to rejoice that we have been permitted to visit Georgia. The glorious work of grace is still going on in many places, and sweetly dawning in other. I have preached twenty-one times in the last fifteen days; so that you may judge of the spirit of the times. This, however, has been a preaching season, and nothing done for the college.

"I am truly glad that you have been good enough to attend, as much as opportunity would allow, to the little flocks which we have attended so often together. Not a day but what I think of you and of them. It is a common impression that my talent would effect more, unconfined to any particular churches. But if I have a home at all, I see no particular reason why I should leave Columbia. Though I may not have effected much there, it has afforded me a sort of rallying point. They have fed and clothed me while I have bestowed much of my time on others. The Lord appoints the bounds of our habitation, and we ought never to admit an excuse

for removal, which we should be afraid to offer at the day of judgment.

"It will be a great disappointment to me if we should fail to reach the general association. Will you make every effort to maintain this institution? If I should not get there, you must be my representative."

On the 17th of May he wrote to his brother-in-law, Mr. D. Terry, from Jefferson county.

"I am now engaged in máking collections, retracing my steps, and expect to leave Georgia, if the Lord will, about the 1st of July. I have reason to be very thankful to the Father of all our mercies, that in his kind providence he directed my steps to Georgia. It is the finest country I have ever seen: both for fertility of soil, and the prosperity of the church. Brother J. D. is expected to baptize about fifty persons on to-morrow, at Bethesda, in Green county. The progress of the Baptists is here, perhaps, without a parallel. My preaching has received an attention far above my personal merits; and been blessed, perhaps, as much as it ever was in any place."

On the 7th of December, 1828, Mr. Clop-

ton made the following interesting entry in his journal.

"On the 26th of December, 1827, I arrived in Augusta, (Georgia,) and left the same place for my home in Virginia, about the 13th of July following—having spent a little more than six months within that state. These six months have been to me the most interesting period of my ministry. I preached about one hundred and sixty times; and witnessed, in many instances, the wonderful works of God to the children of men. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord to many of the churches; and my labours, as well as those of my companion and fellow labourer, John Hubbard, appeared to be blessed to the good of souls.

"I met with many dear brethren who received me and my companion, not only into their houses, but into their hearts. Never, never may I forget their Christian hospitality: never, never may I cease to feel grateful to God for his kindness in providing such friends.

"My mission in behalf of the college was blessed of the Lord.

"The exercises of my heart have in this period resembled those of the preceding years: only I seemed to sink lower than I had done since I professed religion. My inward corruptions—my easy besetting sins—did so swell and rage, that I seemed for a while to lose entirely the love and fear of God. I appeared to be sunk almost beyond the hope of recovery. But like the inhabitant of the liquid stream when cast out of his native element, I was not only restless, but miserable.

"God has ordained an inseparable connexion between sin and misery; but none can be so sensible of this as his children. They have the seeing eye, the hearing ear, and the understanding heart. When they provoke his holy anger, he chastises—he scourges them—by giving them to feel deeply their guilt and helplessness. Yet, as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

"I am in amazement at my own depravity in departing from the living God; and at the unsearchable riches of his grace in not departing from me for ever. But hitherto hath

he helped me, and I will praise his adorable name. O, that he may reveal to my soul more and more of his ineffable glory in Christ Jesus his Son.

"This has been to me a blessed day, in deed and in truth. The rain prevented me from attending public worship; but it hath not prevented me from worshipping God in spirit and in truth, if it ever be my privilege thus to worship. This day's experience convinces me, that, in one respect, I lose much enjoyment by itinerating. I seldom have time to read any thing but three or four chapters in the Bible every day. And these I often read in so much haste as to retain but little. In my library there is always a rich and bountiful repast, with which I delight to regale the appetite of my soul. But self, even in this sense, must be denied. A soldier must listen to the watchword of his captain. He must ever be on the alert: he must follow where his captain leads, though it be to face danger and death in the front of the battle. The ministers of Jesus Christ are called to hardness as good and faithful soldiers of their Captain.

"Hannibal's soldiers were ruined by keeping winter-quarters at Cannæ. There they ate—they drank—they played, till they were enervated, the ardour of victory was abated, and Rome rendered impregnable.

"How important to be in season and out of season in preaching Christ! I must deny myself the privilege of reading—the privilege of resting occasionally at home, and go again into distant lands—into Georgia and Alabama. O, that Abraham's God, who called him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, may guide and direct my steps, and make me a blessing to the college and to the church."

Toward the close of the year 1828, the college being still burdened with debt, Mr. Clopton was urged again, by the Board of Trustees, to accept the agency to the state of Georgia. Much as he loved his dear charge, and prized the privileges of his retired study, his desire to place the college on a permanent basis, and to make it a blessing to many generations, induced him to enter, once more, on the self-denying and arduous labours of the office. Mr. Hubbard, his esteemed Christian friend, accompanied him again. This tour

was remarkable for the deep, solemn, and unusual exercises of Elder Clopton's mind. The propriety of inserting, in this volume, an account of these and similar conflicts, may by some be questioned. It appears, however, to the writer to be indispensable to a correct knowledge of his character. Possessing a temperament inclined to gloom and despondency; with clear and enlarged views of the holiness and grandeur of God, the spirituality and strictness of his law, and the infinite obligation of Christians to "live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;" and a conscience peculiarly scrupulous and tender, it is not wonderful that offences which, to others, appeared mere peccadilloes, should rise in his estimation to fearful magnitude. Should the wicked take encouragement from his undisguised and penitential confession of heart sins, to indulge their carnal lusts, God will not hold them guiltless. If Mr. Clopton, whose temper was so amiable, whose devotion was so constant and fervent, and whose life was so upright and exemplary, needed to confess, with so much abasement and godly sorrow, his sins,—what

ought to be the conduct of the proud, the profane, the disobedient? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Nor ought feeble Christians to be discouraged because their convictions have not been so pungent, nor their fears and sorrows so overwhelming, as his were. The genuineness—the holiness of our affections must be determined, not by their strength, but by the objects which excite them. If we love God because he is infinitely pure, and lovely, and glorious, and hate sin because it is exceedingly impure, and loathsome, and degrading; if we trust in Christ because he is a Saviour from the power as well as guilt of sin, and delight in the law of the Lord because it is holy, and just, and good, we have unequivocal evidence of our acceptance with God.

The following extracts from his journal are placed, unhesitatingly, before the Christian public. They cannot be read without a lively conviction of the unfeigned and profound humiliation of the author. The ungodly may ridicule or blaspheme; cold and heartless professors may sneer or censure;

but the tempted, humble, contrite Christian will sympathize with the pious author.

"On this 4th day of January, 1829, I record my exercises during the last month. I am now at brother D. Holman's, Iredell, North Carolina, on my way to Georgia. During the month of December, I preached only seven times, and baptized one person. Toward the close of the month, I was brought to look back upon the whole of my life—that before as well as that after my profession of religion, and engaging in the work of the ministry. In the review of my religious life, if it deserve the name, I have been made seriously to doubt whether I have been converted. From Sunday night, or rather, from Sunday morning, about two hours before day, until Tuesday night following, (I feel confident,) I did not sleep one hour, while much of the two nights was employed in prayer. I lost not only my appetite for food, but my strength of body also. I had frequent chills, and feared seriously the convulsion of desperation. But during most of the time, I had my mind directed in contemplation and prayer to a God of justice, truth, and mercy. In

my apprehension, (and my views are now but little varied,) I had never done any thing as it should have been done. My vainglory, and pride, and lust were laid low in the very dust, because God did speak to me, as it were, from the whirlwind of his indignation. But out of the belly of hell I did still aim to cry for mercy. And I have some feeble hope that Abraham's God hath heard and answered my prayer. How exceedingly unmeet have I been to stand as a mouth for God! I am amazed that the great and terrible God has borne with me in the character of a minister. How awfully evident has it appeared to me, that they who bear the vessels of the sanctuary should be holy in heart and in life! But I am conscious of the most woful backsliding. I have failed to teach *myself* those things which I have inculcated, under the high sanction of Divine authority, upon others. For this I desire to humble myself under the mighty hand of God, if, peradventure, I may obtain mercy. With every and my latest breath, I have reason to say, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; and according to the multitude

of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.' And while I beg and wrestle for mercy, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, I desire again to give myself, soul and body, time, talents, and opportunities, to the mighty God of Jacob. O, for an increase of faith, and hope, and love! O, that God may suffer me to labour for his glory, and honour my feeble attempts with his blessing! May he give me grace to persevere in wisdom's ways! May he keep me, by his power, through faith, unto salvation! If, indeed, he has spoken peace and pardon to my soul, may he give me help, so that I may not turn again to folly.

"*February* 2, 1829. Another month has terminated; and I am, through grace, still in the land of mercy and of hope. During the first three days of the month, my exercises of soul were such as are described in the preceding pages.

"From Sunday morning until the next Sunday morning, I had not more than two nights of good rest. And during my wakeful moments, my soul did labour, almost continually, under a deep sense of the holiness

and terrible majesty of God; of the purity and extensive demands of the Divine law; and of my consequent guilt, misery, danger, and helplessness. On the morning of the eighth day, after rising from secret prayer, and returning to the house of my sojourn, these words came into my mind, bringing some degree of comfort, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' I afterwards preached from these words, 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'

"From that time, (January 4,) I have not been disturbed much, either by day or night, with dark, gloomy, and despairing thoughts. My hours have been mostly cheerful, and my rest refreshing and comfortable. And although I daily have reason to mourn over my inward corruptions, as well as my past iniquities, yet I desire to praise the God of all grace, that since my affliction, I have been sustained to an unusual degree in fighting against sin.

"Owing to my travelling, I have preached only fourteen times during this month. On some occasions I have enjoyed a degree of

liberty. I find, that when I endeavour to keep a conscience void of offence toward God and man, then do I feel most confidence in preaching. In the contemplation of my exemption from my easy besetting sin, during the past month, in an extraordinary degree, I have abundant cause of thanksgiving and praise to the mighty God of Jacob. But my apprehension of things eternal is exceedingly feeble, so that in reading the works of great men of God, I feel assured, that if I be indeed a child of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, I must be the merest babe.

"'O, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!'

"I think I desire the sincere milk of the word, that I may grow thereby. I think that I desire to be holy, in heart and in life, because God is holy, and hath commanded me to be holy; and to be holy is the only way to be happy."

Of the success of Elder Clopton's agency in this tour we have no certain information;

he collected, probably, for the college about $2000. He was everywhere kindly received by the liberal Baptists of Georgia, preached frequently with great acceptance, and returned about the middle of May to his residence in Charlotte, bringing with him the most affectionate remembrance of the kindness and hospitality of his brethren in the south.

An incident which occurred on one of his trips in Georgia, is thus related by his travelling companion: "We had been journeying all day, and were near Sunbury. As we were watering our horses, I said to him, 'Have you your pocket-book?' I had never, that I remember, asked him a similar question before, and did not even suspect that it was lost. He felt—his countenance changed—it was gone. It contained a considerable sum, which he had just collected for the college. On retracing our steps three hundred paces, we found the book, with its contents, in the middle of the road." Whether this event marks a direct interposition of Him, "without whose notice a sparrow does not fall to the ground," we shall not attempt to determine.

The compiler is gratified to present the

reader with the following brief memoir of Elder Clopton's visits and labours in Georgia, from an esteemed minister* of that state:—

"Few strangers ever excited more attention, and a deeper interest, than did Abner W. Clopton, in his visits to Georgia. He came among us, as the agent of the Columbian College, in the winter of 1828, during a powerful revival of religion. With all the warmth of a zealous minister of the cross, whose soul was wrought up to the highest pitch, he entered into the work, and evidenced an interest so intense for the salvation of sinners, that it may be safely asserted, he preached 'not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' Seldom did he stand up to speak for God, without evincing those marks of true eloquence recommended by the Roman rhetorician, 'If you would have me weep, you must first express the passion of grief yourself;'† and frequently both preacher and hearers were bathed in tears. His sermons were

* Rev. A. Sherwood.

† ——— "Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi." *Hor.*

always full of both doctrine and practice; and he generally improved them, or drew his inferences, as he advanced in his subject. He did not understand the gospel as a set of abstract propositions, on which the mind might speculate while the heart was unmoved—propositions to which *faith* might cling, with viper-like tenacity, while the body was inactive: his motto was, 'He that *feels* will *act*.' Though, like Paul, he insisted on all the strong doctrines of grace; yet if professed belief in these did not produce an active and holy life, he compared it to the faith of devils, and set down the professors as led astray by 'a deceived heart.'

"He was not satisfied with making collections for the college, and with preaching the gospel; but he accomplished much in the tract cause: he originated several societies, and scattered much light on this interesting branch of benevolent labour.

"In the temperance cause also he was warmly engaged, and aimed to touch that subject in every public discourse. At the request of the author of this imperfect tribute to his memory and his worth, he sketched the

constitution of the Georgia State Temperance Society. Many families, where he lodged, were induced to put away the poison from their houses; and very many resolved, under his appeals on the evils of *spirit*, never again to touch it.*

"He felt but little interest in those subjects which are frequently discussed by many professing Christians; to him they seemed uninteresting, and occupied time which might be spent to advantage. While these were on the *tapis* he sat silent. But enter the subject of experimental and practical religion, and the means of spreading the gospel, and his whole

* "A little girl of seven years promised him never to taste toddy again; and though, to test her integrity, her mother afterward tried to induce her to do it, saying, 'Mr. Clopton could not know it,' &c.; yet all was in vain. May she never violate her promise, nor be united to a drunken husband.

"Seeing a flourishing young peach orchard by the road, he felt so sensibly on the consequences which it would produce, that he entered the house of the owner, and warned him, or rather his lady, of the danger of the temptation—expressing his fears that the fruit of that orchard would bring her to widowhood, and her babes to orphanage. In two years his fears were realized."

soul was engaged. A repartee would sometimes drop out upon his travelling companion; but 'foolish talking and jesting' were not named by him, as the apostle exhorts.

"Long before day I have seen him creep silently from his bed, and spend much time upon his knees. He was a man of much prayer."

The plans for the relief of the college having, contrary to the sanguine expectation of its friends, failed to rescue it from embarrassment, it was deemed necessary, by the Board of Trustees, to make another and vigorous effort to gain the desired object. Who, among all the friends of the institution, was so likely to succeed in the enterprise as Abner W. Clopton? On the 23d of July, 1832, the Board requested the president of the college, the Rev. Dr. Chapin, to solicit his acceptance of the general agency. In December following, after prayerful deliberation, he accepted the appointment; and entered immediately, with his characteristic zeal and disinterestness, on the performance of its arduous duties. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with the condition and prospects of the institution,

that in soliciting again the contributions of the public, he might state "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." He addressed to the Baptist denomination a circular, urging the claims of the unfortunate college to their liberal and untiring support. This appeal, replete with enlarged views and solid arguments, and breathing a spirit of disinterestedness and invincible resolution, is worthy the cause of literature and science, in which it was penned, and highly creditable to its author.

The general agent found it necessary to provoke the friends of the college to generous contributions, by making himself the most praiseworthy sacrifices.

"In urging," says he, in his circular, "the claims of this institution and seeking the means of its relief, it is proper for me to state, that, at a recent meeting of the Board of Trustees, in the city of Washington, I consented to accept the appointment of general agent for its pecuniary concerns. In doing this, I dare not seek any other reward but the consciousness of aiming to promote an object which appears to me important to the inte-

rests of literature in general, and particularly important to the literary improvement of the Baptist denomination. For since I reimbursed to the Board every cent which I had received for services formerly rendered; so I enter now on a gratuitous service. And it may encourage those disposed to contribute for the benefit of the college, when they learn, that not an individual who has promised to raise any certain amount for that purpose, expects any pecuniary compensation."

The proofs of his devotion to the interests of the college did not stop here. He became personally responsible for the sum of $2413, with interest accruing thereon from the 1st of January, 1833. In his last will he made provision for the payment of this debt, from a small estate which he had earned by the instruction of youth.

Until the commencement of his illness, which in March terminated his valuable life, he was employed mostly in writing letters to the wealthy and liberal friends of the college, urging them to afford it generous and prompt relief. The last of his "labours of love" was writing a long letter to his esteemed

friend, the Rev. Dr. Brantly of Philadelphia, which displayed not less the fervour of his Christian affection, than his deep solicitude for the success of his agency. It was penned with unusual neatness and accuracy, on the day preceding his fatal attack, but was not forwarded till its loved author had been numbered among the "tenants of the tomb."

In the death of Elder Clopton the cause of learning in general, and the Columbian college in particular, sustained a severe loss. Had his life been spared, he would, in all probability, have accomplished, speedily, the object on which his heart was much set, and to which he had devoted his energies,—the entire deliverance of the college from debt. But the Lord was pleased to remove him, suddenly, from the most important labours, and the most flattering prospects of success, to teach us, among other salutary lessons, that "our sufficiency is of God."

The labour of executing the plans of the lamented agent for rescuing the sinking college devolved on the earliest, the most devoted, the most disinterested, and the most efficient of all its patrons, the Rev. Luther Rice. It

was devoutly wished by many that he might live to behold and enjoy the object for which, with deep and painful solicitude, he diligently toiled through many years,—the Columbian College, placed on a permanent basis, richly endowed, a central point of literary and scientific influence to the Baptist denomination in the United States, and a fountain of *religious* influence, sending forth streams to refresh and fertilize, not only our own beloved country, but the distant, barren, and solitary wilderness. But God appointed otherwise.

It deserves a passing notice, and will receive from some the tribute of a tear, that Semple, Clopton, and Rice all fell in their efforts to sustain the sinking college. Honoured triumvirate! They "were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

The following extract from the minutes of the Board of Trustees will close this chapter. It needs no comment.

"April 10th, 1833.

"The secretary read a letter from Mr. Archer B. Davidson, announcing the death of Rev. A. W. Clopton; whereupon,

"*Unanimously resolved*, That this Board deeply laments the loss which this College has sustained in the death of ABNER W. CLOPTON, late general agent of the Board. They regard it as an afflicting dispensation of Divine Providence, which has removed from a wide sphere of usefulness an eminently good man and minister of the gospel, and an ardent, efficient, and disinterested friend of the Columbian College."

CHAPTER IX.

Elder Clopton ripening for heaven—Interesting letter—Attacked with disease—Letter to his father—Death—Interment—Resolutions passed by a convention of his churches—Funeral—Resolution of the Georgia Baptist convention—Epitaph—Personal appearance.

The time of Mr. Clopton's departure was at hand. He had fought a good fight, he had finished his course, he had kept the faith. He loved the appearing of the Lord, and was ready to receive, at the hand of the righteous Judge, the crown of righteousness. He had been, for some time, evidently ripening for heaven. Already he seemed as the inhabitant of another world. His deadness to the world, his profound humility, his meekness, his charity, his tender concern for the salvation of sinners, were most conspicuous. In a letter to the author, penned not long before his death, he expressed his exercises with an unrestrained freedom, inspired by Christian friendship.

"My mind has been turned, of late, to a

serious review both of my life and my ministry. In this review I have sometimes been on the verge of despair. Two inquiries have borne on my anxious mind by day and by night:—1. Can it be possible, that *all this time* I have been a child of God, and a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ? 2. If I have been all this time deceiving myself, and, of course, others with a false profession, can there be mercy in the bowels of a holy God for such a sinner? In these exercises, I can truly say, that I think I have seen more of the terrible majesty of God, and more of the infinite evil of sin, than I had ever discovered before. O, I trust I have felt deeply the force of these words, 'None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.' Never has my heart been so fixed against sin. But still I find there is a proneness to sin. But my easy besetting sin has been made as bitter as death. But even now, after months of conflict, during which time I have passed some sleepless nights, I am not able to say, without doubt, that I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, so as to *know* that my sins are forgiven. But I humbly trust that my

evidence of acceptance in the Beloved is strengthened. According to the testimony of my brethren, my preaching has been much improved during this time. However, I have only urged those great fundamental truths which you teach, and which you have repeatedly heard from me in a plain, pointed, and practical manner. The fact that sin has appeared, if possible, infinitely more odious, and deserving the wrath of God—and holiness infinitely more desirable than formerly—may possibly have added more solemnity to my appearance and manner. I think I can discover, also, that the spirit of forgiveness and tenderness toward offending brethren, and toward all sinners, has prevailed more in my heart. But, alas! my dear brother, I am not now half awake; and while I must cry daily, God be merciful to me a *sinner*—*the* sinner—the *chief* of sinners, I must beg also—I do beg and entreat the God of infinite mercy and infinite power to awaken in me a suitable concern for Christless, dying sinners.

"Will you be good enough to look over all my faults so far as to write to me once

more at least? Let me know the state of religion in your churches. Does your own soul prosper? Are you now better satisfied respecting your hope of eternal life than formerly?"

If the writter is not greatly deceived, the above letter breathes a spirit free alike from worldliness and self-sufficiency: it is unearthly—heavenly. "*My besetting sin is as bitter as death.*" What deep penitence! "*Look over all my faults.*" What humility! Who can read such language without self-examination, confession, and amendment? Christ was preparing the holy man for a mansion above.

Elder Clopton was remarkably punctual in fulfilling his appointments for preaching. He carried this virtue, perhaps, to excess. He would not unfrequently ride miles, in the most inclement weather, to fulfil his engagements, without even the prospect of meeting a congregation. He fell at last a victim to exposure: the writer dare not aver that this exposure was imprudent. He preached several times in the county of Mechlenburg during

a cold and sleety season, and sowed the seeds of the disease which terminated his life.

On the 4th of March, 1833, he was attacked with pleurisy. Medical aid was immediately called; and for some days the symptoms did not threaten a fatal issue. But death had been commissioned to discharge the faithful servant from his conflicts, and neither the assiduity of friendship nor the skill of science could turn aside his dart. The disease gained strength. Its ravages were steady and fearful. Lingering, anxious hope took her flight. On the 13th, nine days after his attack, he wrote, by an amanuensis, to his venerable father. Nothing can increase the touching interest of this dying letter.

"My very dear father,—Almost at every parting interview, for some years, which to me has been precious, I have left you with fear that, through your great age, I never should see you again in this world. Through the folly and self-confidence of my mind, I had forgotten that death is no respecter of persons; that he fills his dominions with mil-

lions of infants, as well as those of middle and old age. In sending on an appointment to visit you, I felt, what I have not unusually felt before, the great pleasure of meeting my parents and brothers once more. But, O! how little did I anticipate the change that has come! I preached two funerals on the 1st and 2d days of March; though very much exposed on Friday, I did not feel material inconvenience from the exposure, and no fearful apprehensions of the consequences. I preached on Sunday, came home on Sunday afternoon, went to court on Monday, returned home in the evening in perfect health; nor did I feel the least symptom of disease until Tuesday morning, when my appetite for breakfast was gone, and I became chilly. From that time my fever began to increase. As far as my experience goes, it has been to me a new kind of fever. It has been attended with not only an unconquerable, burning thirst, but with gnawing, and twisting, and folding of the tongue, so as to be a true realization of the prophet's phrase, 'a dry and parched thirst.' All this time, too, the pulse has been up as high as from ninety-three to one hun-

dred. There has been nothing like sweat; no breaking of the fever. It has marched steadily on, as if directed by an infallible hand to its object. My mind, at first, was rather insensible; but when the gnawings, the fever in my bosom, and especially in my mouth, began to make me feel that there was might in Jehovah's hand, my soul began to be filled with reverential awe and principles of holiness. My heart and life again passed in review before me, and I appeared to myself more vile than I suppose it possible for you to conceive. I felt, however, and I still feel, that if God should lock me up in hell, I would attempt to praise him there for his great goodness toward me.

"On other occasions of distress and affliction, my mind has been distracted with fear and anxiety; but in this I feel neither murmurs nor repining. I would not have died without this affliction, or something resembling it, on any consideration, believing it to be as necessary in the scheme of my salvation as the atonement of Christ.

"I did not think until yesterday morning that things would come to so speedy a deter-

mination; I then thought it was too late for me to send for you; yet, as it may please God to protract my life three or four days longer, it would give me great pleasure to see brother Robert and brother John before I cross Jordan, or to see any of the dear brethren who may find it convenient to visit me. My amiable young brother Collins has consented to bear this letter to you. O that I could, if consistent with the will of God, lay my eyes and hands, as it were, upon you and my dear aged mother once more. But I suppose this cannot be. However, if I should reach Canaan's happy shore, I have no doubt but my gray-headed parents will soon come over and enjoy the good of that land with me. If sin were there, I should not want to go. If sickness, sorrow, pain, and death were there, I should not want to go to Canaan. But God himself, who cannot lie, has placed on record, that it is free from all which renders earth miserable. My aged parent, according to my own view of the case, I expect to see you no more on this side of eternity.

"Father and mother, farewell. Brothers

and sisters, farewell. Servants, old and young, farewell. "Your affectionate son."

Mr. Clopton endured his intense sufferings with exemplary calmness and resignation to the will of God. No murmuring or impatient word escaped his lips. With the most humbling sense of his unworthiness, he united a firm reliance on the promises of the gospel. With Paul he could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

He was very grateful for the assiduous attention shown him during his illness; and expressed fervent gratitude to God that he had raised up friends to nurse and lift him. On being told that he might recover to preach the gospel, he replied, "Should I be restored I will redouble my efforts."

He lingered until the 20th, and fell asleep in Christ, just four days before he would have been forty-nine years old. He had for a long while enjoyed uninterrupted health; but his vigorous constitution yielded to the

force of a violent inflammatory attack. In the very prime of life, in the midst of labours and usefulness, and from the endeared affection of a numerous circle of Christian friends, did God, unexpectedly, call him to the enjoyment of his eternal reward. "Even so, Lord, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Mr. Clopton was respected by the rich, and loved by the poor. The procession which followed his body to its place of rest embraced every class of society. This circumstance was mentioned by one of the number. It drew tears from a member of one of the churches. "It reminds me," he said, "of the gospel which he preached; free alike for the rich and the poor, the mightiest king and meanest slave."

The body was interred at his father's, in Pittsylvania county. For parents, sinking under the weight of years, to be called unexpectedly to bury the most affectionate and the most dutiful of sons, was peculiarly trying and touching. But the prospect of a speedy reunion with him, "on Canaan's happy shore," moderated and calmed their grief.

The estimation in which the character,

talents, and labours of this godly man were held by those who knew him best, appears in the following insertion.

"At a convention of the churches and congregations formerly under the pastoral care of the Rev. Abner W. Clopton, at Mossing Ford meeting house, on Saturday, the 13th of April, 1833, for the purpose of communing together on the mournful event of his death, and to express a sense of his worth and character, the following resolutions were adopted.

"*Resolved*, That we shall ever hold in the most grateful and respectful remembrance the truly Christian and ministerial character and eminent services of our deeply lamented pastor, friend, and brother, Abner W. Clopton, who died on the 20th ultimo, with all that apparent resignation and joyful hope which might have been expected from a Christian so eminently endowed and firmly established in the truth of the glorious gospel.

"*Resolved*, That, as a part of the Baptist denomination in the United States, we feel it a duty to our venerable friend and pastor, under whose ministry we have been instructed, edified, and comforted, for the last ten years

of his life, to express, as we do hereby express, our high sense of his promptitude, unexampled zeal, and unwearied exertions to promote every object connected with the best interests of religion, and of the church of which he was one of the most able, distinguished, and indefatigable servants.

"*Resolved*, That the respectful and affectionate condolence of this meeting be tendered to the afflicted and aged parents of the deceased.

"This meeting feels that the hand of God has indeed pressed them sorely. Our guide, our friend, our comforter has been taken from us. The voice which we had been so long wont to hear from the sacred desk, in pastoral instruction, in kind admonition, in plain exhibition of the truths of the gospel, in powerful appeals in behalf of religion and morality, in terror to the wicked, and in encouragement to the good, with eyes of streaming tears, is now hushed in the silence of the grave. He is no more who, with so powerful and interesting an effect, led our devotions in this house of God, bore us along with him in prayer and praise, and set before us so uni-

form and illustrious a pattern of worshipping in spirit and in truth. We are amazed at the change that has come over us; so sudden, so unexpected, and fraught with such a complication of disappointment and wo. In whatever direction we turn our eyes, we see new cause of grief.' In every social and religious circle we see the sad index of bereavement and affliction. But it does not become Christians, though they may weep, though they must weep, to sorrow as those who have no hope. The loss which we have sustained none of us can yet realize; but that loss is the gain of this wise and faithful steward. Yes, his spirit is now associated with those who have 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

"Our friend and brother Clopton was always distinguished for the exercise of the Christian graces. He had most humbling and prostrating views of the depravity and sins of the human kind. He deeply felt

within himself the weight of his sins, and often deplored his unworthiness; and hence his soul imparted a fervour and pathos which often thrilled through every heart that heard him. His faith in the divinity of the Son of God, and his ability and willingness to save, was always decisive, and seemed to enter into his heart and understanding; and he dwelt upon it in his private conversations and public discourses with all his accustomed zeal and forcible reasoning, and illustrated it with his best power of eloquence; showing the Christian system dry and hopeless without an infinite Saviour, and him who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, as denying the Lord who bought him with his blood. His love to God and man was equal to his faith and hope. He lived for himself as little as any man; as much for the glory of God, and the good of souls, as any other.

"No man spent less thought on this world's goods; he gave himself wholly to the service of his Lord; and under the constant control of such graces, he was instant in season and out of season. There was no ambiguity in his public or private life. He never feared

to declare the whole counsel of God. He never withheld his name from the many publications which he was called to make in the vicissitudes of the church, and to defend its principles and policy.

"In such a man might be necessarily expected the sincere, undisguised, efficient friend. A numerous and wide-spreading circle will testify to this. More especially will many young men, preachers of the gospel, who have been reared up, and nurtured, and instructed in theology by him, testify to this truth. Young men, whom he loved as his children and brethren, whom he counselled and cherished with his wisdom and prudence, whose hands, and hearts, and hopes, he strengthened by his presence and timely aid,—these will testify to this by their tears and sorrows.

"Enmity was a stranger to his bosom. He could love, but he could not hate. He was the poor man's friend, and he was honoured and esteemed by those in the upper walks of life.

"Such was the life and such was the character of Abner W. Clopton, whose death we

so deeply lament and deplore. And can such examples, such graces, and unceasing devotion to the salvation of men, cease to have an influence as his body now moulders in the silent grave? No; his valuable life and ministerial services should ever remind us to bless God that he has ever raised up amongst us such a man, to elevate our infant churches to our present peaceable and prosperous condition. They should ever remind us that the best and most valuable servants of God are but earthen vessels, and broken at his pleasure, and return to him, the giver. They should remind us of the duty of humbly and devoutly praying to the great Head of the church, that he will in due time supply us with a successor in the high and sacred office, of a character after his own heart, and who shall be instrumental in perpetuating the peace and prosperity of our Zion. They should remind us, friends and brethren, that our lives are short and uncertain; that every pulsation brings us nearer to that tribunal where ministers and people must meet, and answer for the deeds done in the body, and where we must receive the sentence which will seal our eternal state. And they

should remind us that our venerable pastor and much esteemed brother has ascended to his God and our God, and that we should prepare to meet him.

"B. W. LESTER, *Chairman.*
"A. A. DAVIDSON, *Secretary.*"

About this time Elder John Kerr preached an appropriate and impressive sermon, on this afflictive event, at Ash Camp meeting house, to a crowded auditory. All classes were wrapped in gloom. Sighs, tears, and sobs, in every part of the house, prompted the exclamation, "Behold how they loved him!" "Never did I see," said an intelligent spectator, "such demonstrations of affection and reverence—such proofs that a pastor's memory was enshrined in the hearts of his people." This mourning was not confined to the Baptist congregations of Charlotte, but extended throughout the wide circle of Mr. Clopton's acquaintanceship. All felt that a good, and great, and useful man had fallen. Resolutions expressive of the high estimation in which his Christian character, ministerial abilities, and zealous labours were held; and

the unfeigned sorrow which his unexpected death had caused, were adopted by many religious and other bodies. The following from the minutes of the "Georgia Baptist Convention," for May, 1833, will be inserted as a sample of the rest.

"*Resolved*, That we feel deeply penetrated with the affliction, which it hath pleased the great Head of the church to send upon us, in the death of our beloved brother, A. W. Clopton, of Virginia. We would unite our condolence with the churches which he served, and the Christian public in general, on account of this afflictive dispensation. An able minister of the new testament, a good man, a ripe scholar, of fervent zeal and unblemished reputation: we would long cherish in our memories his useful life and virtuous character."

A plain headstone marks the lonely spot where reposes all that was mortal of Abner W. Clopton, bearing a brief inscription, dictated by himself on his dying bed, accurately expressing the views which he entertained of himself, and of the foundation of his hope:

A VILE SINNER, SAVED BY GRACE.

Elder Clopton was of commanding appearance: about six feet high; spare; of thin visage; remarkably straight; of dark complexion; dark, curly hair, inclining to baldness; with keen hazel eyes; a countenance grave, bordering on melancholy; of a temperament nervous and ardent; and deemed in his youth very handsome.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Clopton's character—Temper—Good son—Affection to kindred—Sincere friend—Upright citizen—Eminent Christian—Humility—Contrition—Meekness—Disinterestedness—Independence—Piety—Sympathizing letter—Eccentricities—Imperfections—Habits—Abilities as a writer; as a preacher—Doctrinal views.

It is extremely difficult to delineate with accuracy human character. Moral qualities, like the colours of the rainbow, are so intermingled, that the clearest discrimination is necessary to distinguish them, and the liveliest power of description to exhibit them. To these high qualifications the writer makes no pretensions. He aims only to sketch the more prominent and interesting features in the character of Mr. Clopton; and he will promise only that the picture shall be free from fictitious exaggeration.

Elder Clopton's temper, constitutionally irritable, had been softened and subdued by reflection, frequent afflictions, and, above all, by Divine grace. The best proof of the amiableness of his temper is furnished by the

fact that he resided, on the most intimate terms, in the family of Mr. Roach, in Charlotte, ten years, without the slightest interruption of their friendly intercourse. This case affords incontestable proof that an irascible temper may be curbed by parental discipline, and entirely subdued by watchfulness, prayer, and perseverance.

He was not one of those who, intent on great and dazzling actions, overlook the common duties of life. He was not less scrupulous and punctual in the discharge of ordinary obligations, than determined and energetic in the prosecution of the greatest enterprise. No man can be a good Christian who does not perform the relative duties of life. Mr. Clopton was emphatically a *good son*. His letters to his aged and esteemed parents abound with the most filial sentiments, and breathe the most affectionate and tender spirit. Take the following for a specimen: "Not a day passes, without a serious recollection of the parents who gave me being, extended a kind and watchful care over me in helpless infancy, and whose wholesome counsel has been offered to me in riper years. My prayers

that God may sustain you, to walk in the light of his countenance, as you descend the steeps of old age, are frequently bedewed with tears of filial affection."

He was remarkably *kind to his relatives*, especially to his *brothers*. As he was considerably older than they were, he watched over them with almost paternal solicitude. He counselled, cautioned, and encouraged them; and gave, if possible, still stronger proofs of his attachment, by his efforts to promote their education, procure for them profitable employments, and raise them to usefulness and respectability. For the salvation of his relatives he prayed constantly, fervently, and with many tears. In a letter to his father he wrote, "And when I remember my dear, unconverted brothers—think where I once stood, and where they now stand, my poor heart is melted, and my tears flow apace. For you, and for them, and for my sisters I daily pray; nor do I forget the aged servants who laboured for my support. I inquire often whether or not we shall all meet in the New Jerusalem?" He was not satisfied, as too many professors of religion, it is to be

feared are, to pray only for their salvation. In his conversation and letters, he frequently and earnestly exhorted them to "flee from the wrath to come." To one of his brothers he wrote,—"But how stands the case with you? Shall I indulge the fear that your golden moments are wasted? that while many of your age, with opportunities far less promising, are pressing into the kingdom of heaven, you are hoping, without inquiry—without asking to receive—without seeking to find—without knocking, that the door will be opened unto you? I preached, to-day, the funeral of the young man whom I heard say, the morning before his death, 'Mother, give me a little cool water to cool my parched tongue;' and, after receiving the water, exclaimed aloud, '*Now I know what I have lost.*' That God Almighty may forbid that this should one day be the language of my dear brothers, is my prayer."

Mr. Clopton possessed all the qualities of an *estimable friend.* Frank, sincere, disinterested, and sociable, he seemed formed for friendship. It is not easy to determine whether he loved more, or was more beloved.

No man ever drew his friends into closer and firmer alliance than he did; and no man ever found a warmer and more faithful friend than he was. He was remarkable, too, for his condescension and kindness to servants. He laboured, with commendable zeal, to instruct the coloured population among whom he lived. He assigned them large and comfortable portions of the houses in which he statedly preached; and addressed them frequently in a style adapted to their capacities, and on subjects suited to their necessities.

Of Elder Clopton, it may be truly said he was a *good citizen*. He punctually fulfilled all his obligations to his fellow men. He obeyed, literally and perfectly, the apostolic injunction, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."

It was as a CHRISTIAN that the subject of this memoir was mainly distinguished. He had drunk deeply of the spirit of his Master. His knowledge of sacred truth was not cold and fruitless speculation, but clear, experimental, and sanctifying. His religious affections were not like a mountain stream, swoln by a hasty shower, turbid, impetuous, and

noisy; but pure, deep, and constant, like a river fed by living springs. His life displayed, in vernal beauty, the renovating influence of the gospel. Some of the Christian graces for which he was pre-eminently distinguished, demand particular notice.

Humility was the garment in which he was constantly adorned. He not only claimed, but invariably sought, the lowest seat. He possessed talents fitted to command respect in any station, but he sought not honour of men. In a letter to his father, written during a tour to the south, he remarked, "If any thing good is to grow out of my tour, it must be, a more thorough conviction upon my mind that I have no business in cities or towns; and that I am sent to preach the gospel to the poor and destitute."

It cannot have escaped the attention of the reader, that he possessed *a deep sense of his sinfulness.* "Nothing very remarkable," said he, in a letter to his esteemed father, "has occurred in my experience since I wrote to you; unless it be, that I become more and more acquainted with the bottomless depth of iniquity in my own heart." Nor was this

language the effect of momentary and unusual conviction: it expressed the prevailing sentiment and feeling of his heart. "O wretched man that I am," he would frequently exclaim, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Godly sorry was the habitual frame of his mind. He was inclined, by his temperament, to contemplate the terrific, rather than the pleasing,—the majesty and purity, rather than the goodness and condescension, of God. Yet, who can listen to his unfeigned confessions of sin, and mark his deep humiliation and pungent godly sorrow, without coveting his feelings?

Closely allied to these feelings was his *meekness*. His bold and uncompromising opposition to sin and error, of every shape and hue, raised him many enemies, and subjected him to much obloquy. He rendered "not railing for railing, but contrarywise, blessing." If at any time his natural temper gained an ascendency, it was soon quelled, and the ebullition succeeded by confession and abasement.

Disinterestedness may be mentioned as one of the most remarkable traits in the cha-

racter of this estimable man. He lived not for himself. His talents and time were all devoted to God and his fellow men. Every benevolent object was sure to gain his attention and support. He did not wait for his assistance to be solicited, but, like his Lord, "went about doing good." In him the poor found a kind and generous friend. If "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," he possessed it. If all the members of Christian churches were as self-denying, liberal, and disinterested as he was, the treasuries of our benevolent associations would never lack funds; our seminaries of learning might be amply endowed; our Bible societies might carry forward, with rapid and increasing speed, the work of translating, printing, and distributing the holy Scriptures in every language under heaven; and our mission societies might send heralds to every heathen land on the globe, announcing the approach of Messiah's universal reign.

Independence was by no means the least prominent trait in Mr. Clopton's character.

He judged for himself, and acted on his own responsibility. He could not be carried along by the popular current, however strong, contrary to his own conviction. It was aptly said by an intelligent gentleman, who knew him intimately, "There is no ambiguity in his character." His conduct was a fair index of his views and feelings. Of him it may be properly affirmed, as it was of the venerable reformer, John Knox, "He never feared the face of man." The charity, falsely so called, which annihilates the distinction between truth and error, holiness and sin, he neither possessed nor admired. "There is," he remarked, in a letter to Elder Semple, "a certain religious *pliability* which calls this man" (an aspiring sectary,) "brother. I do not understand this to be the charity which rejoices in the truth: the charity taught by Paul, who again and again, while writing to the churches, names certain heretics, as if on purpose that we might have the example, on similar occasions, of one infallibly inspired." It is not only possible, but probable, that he sometimes suffered this noble quality to degenerate into harshness. "When offenders,"

one of his esteemed members remarks, "and especially drunkards, seemed disposed to retain their places in the church, he would become fired with a zeal which sometimes made his warmest friends feel deeply, both for him and the offender. He has been known to rise from his seat, when members have been charged with drunkenness before the church, and declare, with determined look and voice, that he would as soon be in a church with a horse-thief as a drunkard: and a man did not have to drink much before he termed him a drunkard." We will not become the apologist of drunkards; but we believe, from the observation and experience of several years, that a mild, affectionate, and candid treatment, would often reclaim such members as have, unfortunately, begun to diverge from the path of rectitude. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

By no quality was the subject of this memoir more distinguished than the *fervour of his piety*. His religion was not a cold and

lifeless ceremony—a mere shadow—but a real, an active, and an abiding principle. He "walked with God:" his communion was "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Never did uninspired man drink more deeply of the spirit of his Master. All who knew him intimately considered him the most godly of men. It was impossible to associate with him without having a deep impression of the presence, purity, and majesty of God. Many can testify that they not unfrequently retired from his company with the most humbling sense of their unworthiness, and the firmest resolution of devoting themselves fully to God. This influence, not always evanescent as the morning dew, would, sometimes, impart them to increased vigilance and activity for weeks, or months, after the interview. It must be confessed, however, that his piety had sometimes an air of melancholy and severity which rendered it repulsive to strangers and young persons. He was better fitted to command esteem, than to win affection, on a slight acquaintance. But from his intimates this seeming asperity of character was concealed

by his many amiable and shining qualities. His gravity arose from a settled conviction of the importance of eternal verities: his reproofs were the corrections of love.

Mr. Clopton possessed a remarkably sympathizing heart: of this the following letter, addressed to a Christian brother, under a painful bereavement, furnishes sufficient proof. It was a balm to his wounded spirit. He can never forget the soothing sympathy which it breathes.

"VERY DEAR BROTHER J——, Your kind and deeply interesting letter of the 4th of last month reached me nearly three weeks ago, when I was on my way to the ordination of brother ****. I was then much engaged, and I have been ever since; and having but a little while before that written to you, I concluded to defer writing till about the present time. After a careful perusal of your letter, I retired where I often attempt to meet God, and calling to mind my dear bereaved brother, and his lovely, and well-beloved companion, then lifeless and cold, in the silent grave, I prayed and wept for you.

Though my heart is exceedingly depraved it was touched with sympathy. If a great loss may justify deep mourning, then you have much cause of lamentation. But the spirit of inspiration saith to you, and to all believers similarly situated, 'I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.' And this may, nay this must be, a source of cheerful and animating consolation to you. Perhaps you feel that there is not even a shadow of doubt, but the spirit of your M*** rests with Jesus. Few, perhaps none, gave better evidence that they were united to the adorable Redeemer. Your loss, and the loss of the church, are then her everlasting gain. Appropriate then to yourself this expressive language of the pious Watts.

"'Peace then, my sorrows, nor with murmuring voice,
Dare to accuse Heaven's high decree;
She was first ripe for everlasting joys;
—— She waits above for thee.'

"Surely we should not wish to detain even our nearest and dearest friends from the presence of him whose favour is life, and whose

loving-kindness is better than life — whose smile is heaven, and a sight of whom, without a glass between, restores his own image complete to the soul. Can you not still preach from this text: 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice?' Or is it difficult for you to adopt the language of one in much more trying circumstances? 'The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' I trust, my dear brother, that you see clearly, in this dispensation, the unerring hand of him, who is all, and in all. May his Spirit direct you to a wise improvement of your affliction!"

This excellent man was not without some slight *eccentricities of character*. He would occasionally indulge in great abstraction of thought. He, not unfrequently, heard questions proposed to him, by some member of the family in which he resided, without any seeming attention, or breaking the train of his thoughts, and after a few hours, would answer them cheerfully, as if they had just been propounded. Grave as he habitually was, he would sometimes, when diverted, laugh most immoderately. These seasons of laughter

were generally followed by confession, grief and gloom.

Elder Clopton, good and exemplary as he unquestionably was, had his imperfections; and these were quite strongly marked. It must have been perceived, in perusing the preceding pages, that his zeal was not always tempered with discretion; his piety was sometimes tinged with austerity; and his firmness occasionally bordered on obstinacy.

It was thought by some of his friends, that his ardent zeal was easily converted by unforeseen difficulties into cold despondency: that he was remarkable rather for promptness and decision in selecting, than for perseverance in executing, his plans. This opinion should be received with limitation. If through discouragement he partially abandoned some important objects; he clung to others, through the severest and most discouraging conflicts, with irrepressible ardour.

The most striking infirmity in his truly excellent character was, perhaps, his liability to be *blinded by prejudice.* In general his judgment was cautious and just, but on some occasions, and in regard to some subjects,

his understanding seemed to be strangely influenced by his feelings. If any cause enlisted his attention he was liable to meditate on it, with increasing interest, until other matters of equal, or greater importance, were banished from his view as of little moment.

We are naturally led to inquire, by what HABITS did Mr. Clopton attain to such distinction and usefulness? He was not less remarkable for the peculiarity and steadiness of his habits, than for the excellence of his moral character. He always, when in health, rose early, generally before day. He retired immediately to read, meditate, and pray. He read three chapters in the Bible—two in the Old Testament, and one in the New; generally a sermon in Dwight's Theology, or some other approved author, or an equal amount in Scott's Commentary. He would then employ half an hour, or an hour, in meditation and prayer. As he resided in the country, he usually retired to some unfrequented and silent grove, where he might hold uninterrupted communion with his God. Here in imitation of his Master he would "offer up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears."

Sometimes he would become so deeply affected by divine things, and his mind would be so entirely absorbed in the exercise of prayer, that his voice might be heard a distance of four hundred paces, when he was unconscious of speaking above his breath. A very deep impression was made on the minds of many by the solemn and earnest tones of his suppliant voice, in the distant and solitary woodland. It seemed as if, indeed, a worm of earth was in audience with the Majesty of the universe. After the close of his secret devotion, he would return to his room to make preparation for family worship and breakfast. He was plain, but remarkably neat and particular in his dress and personal appearance. In the family in which he resided, and in the numerous families which he visited, he usually led in the stated devotions. He would read a chapter in the Bible, offer a brief comment, or make a pointed exhortation to saints and sinners, sing a few verses, and offer a short, comprehensive, appropriate, and most fervent prayer. So soon as he had eaten a temperate meal, he would commence the labours of the day. Every moment was use-

fully employed. No man understood better than he did the art of redeeming time. If he remained at home he was employed in reading, writing, and arranging, with great exactness, his numerous concerns. If he had an appointment to preach he would ride sometimes twenty miles to reach it, deliver a sermon of an hour's length, form, if necessary and practicable, a tract, temperance, or mission society, ride again several miles to dinner, present a subscription for some benevolent object to the family, discuss the merits of the temperance reform, have a conversation with every accessible person on the subject of religion, engage in social prayer, and then ride many miles to attend a night meeting, or be near his next appointment. Nor did he forget to retire for evening devotion. I have not detailed the extraordinary efforts of a single day, but the common course of his life. Every day, when he enjoyed health, was employed in labours not less diligent and useful. His habits were almost immoveably fixed. The inclemency of the weather, the pleasures of society, which he greatly relished, fatigue, languor, and the seductions to relaxation and

rest, rarely, if ever, prevented his withdrawment for secret prayer. How highly he prized these seasons of devotion we may learn from the following brief extract from his journal: "I never neglect my secret devotion, (without absolute necessity,) but I certainly experience great loss. My bosom seems more exposed to the incursions of the enemy, my resolutions and purposes fail, and I suffer my soul to be stained by evil thoughts—perhaps by evil desires. O, how much need I have of the injunction of my blessed Lord: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'"

Mr. Clopton was remarkably abstemious in his diet, rarely eating a hearty meal, and when slightly indisposed restricting himself to a very small allowance. He fasted religiously, during the latter part of his life, on every Monday, and often through the whole day. In March, 1831, he entered the following on his journal. "I have come to the resolution, humbly, and in the fear of the Lord, that I will fast more frequently, and pray more frequently. I have lost much by neglecting to fast." It was from this period,

I presume, that he adopted the practice of fasting weekly.

He was, emphatically, a *man of business.* He would have succeeded well in any employment. He was punctual in fulfilling all his engagements, diligent in prosecuting all his undertakings, and economical in all his expenditures. His relaxation was a change of labours. His reading was extensive and various, considering the constant pressure of his engagements. Scott, Edwards, Fuller, Doddridge, Dwight, Bellamy, Newton, and Bunyan, were his favourite uninspired authors. He was peculiarly pleased with the lives of Pearce, Brainerd, and Martyn. But the Bible was his choicest and most constant companion: he studied it, not so much with the accuracy of a critic, as with the devotion of a Christian; it was his strength, his treasure, and his rejoicing.

It will not be inappropriate to offer some remarks on the ABILITIES of Mr. Clopton, and his MANNER of preaching. He was endowed by nature, not with a brilliant, but with what was far more valuable, a sound, well balanced, and vigorous intellect. In his

early years he did not make rapid, but respectable advances in learning. In college he was esteemed for his literary and scientific attainments. He possessed more talent for writing than for preaching. As a writer his style was correct, lucid, and nervous; his thoughts, if not original and striking, were just and weighty. He possessed but little talent for disputation, permitting himself to be borne forward, in the ardour of discussion, to unguarded and untenable assertions. In description he was more fortunately gifted. His pictures of vice were sometimes frightfully correct. He wrote but little for the press, and that little consisted of circulars, and other short communications, composed amid the incessant anxieties and labours of his ministry. He composed with great facility, some of his best productions not costing him a moment's premeditation.

As a preacher, he was endowed with solid and useful, rather than shining and popular gifts. His sermons were remarkable, rather for perspicuity, than for depth or originality. He successfully aimed to adapt his discourses to the weakest capacity. Returning from an

annual association, where he had preached with acceptance to a vast concourse, he asked an illiterate servant, "Did you understand my sermon to-day?" "Not all of it," was the reply. "Well," he said, with evident marks of humiliation, "I will endeavour hereafter, so to preach that every person may understand me." Believing that he was called, in divine providence, to preach mostly to the illiterate, he studiously adapted his discourses to their capacities and circumstances.

Never was an uninspired man more faithful in his ministrations than was the subject of this biography. He "knew no man after the flesh." He "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God." He attacked vice with unrelenting severity. Neither elevated station, nor shining talents, nor popular favour, could shield it from the pungent darts of his reproofs and sarcasm. He possessed a large measure of the spirit which prompted the Baptist to say, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife." Truth was dearer to him than reputation or life. Had he lived in another time, and in another

place, he would have been one of the most unflinching and triumphant victims of martyrdom. The maxim by which he regulated his ministerial labours, he expresses in a letter to an esteemed Christian brother. "Universally, in church or state, honesty—naked honesty—and decision are the best policy."

His fidelity differed widely from that unchristian severity by which Antinomian polemics are generally distinguished. It was the offspring of love; charity rejoicing in the truth. It was evident he took no pleasure in causing pain in his hearers. He was

> "———————— affectionate in look,
> And tender in address, as well became
> A messenger of grace to guilty men."

Rarely did he address sinners without mingling tears with his warnings and expostulations. He spoke under a manifest sense of his responsibility to God. The solemnity of the judgment day, and the fearful retributions of eternity, seemed to fill and overwhelm his mind. It was impossible to hear him without a conviction that he was "serious in a serious cause;" that he "believed, and therefore

spake." His sermons rarely failed to produce one important effect,—a solemn conviction of the danger of living without an interest in Christ. He sought to be useful, not popular. His preaching manifested an increasing unconcern for the applause of men. He thus closes some remarks respecting a minister admired for his elocution. "But, alas! what can great gifts effect without a deep and heart-touching love, the very soul of all real gospel preaching? My daily prayer is—at least the words are uttered—that the Lord may endue me with such gifts and graces, and such only, as he may own and bless to the glory of his name, in the salvation of his people. While others excite wonder and admiration, may the Lord make it my highest aim to reach the heart, to rouse the torpid conscience, and alarm the slumbering souls of sinners." "Posthumous fame," he would frequently exclaim, in the dying words of Dr. Scott, "the veriest bubble the devil ever set to catch a soul."

This devoted preacher relied for the success of his ministrations on the Divine blessing upon the simple and faithful exhibition of the truth. No gospel labourer ever more fully

entered into the spirit of the apostolic declaration, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." He pursued a safe medium between Antinomian indolence, on the one hand, and Pharisaic sufficiency, on the other. He laboured as if success depended entirely on his exertions, and prayed as if it depended entirely on Divine grace. In the pulpit, and in his daily intercourse with men, he sowed the seed, to adopt an idea from the excellent Fuller, and in the closet he watered it with tears of fervent supplication.

I should not do justice to the gospel ministry, nor exhibit fairly the talents of Elder Clopton, were I to omit pointing out the defects in his manner of preaching. He was studious, but did not closely study his sermons. He relied on the impulse of the moment, not only for language, but for illustrations, arguments, and sometimes even for a general arrangement of his subject. The result was precisely what might have been expected. His sermons were desultory. They contained many fine thoughts, striking illustrations, lucid arguments, and pungent

appeals; but they were often thrown confusedly together. There was not a text in the Bible from which he could not forcibly inveigh against the vices of intemperance and covetousness. His sermons made invariably a good impression; but it was not so distinct, deep, and valuable, especially on cultivated minds, as by more method and research it might have been. It does not appear that he approved this manner of preaching; but adopted it in consequence of the ceaseless pressure of his engagements. He felt the highest pleasure in hearing well-arranged and well-digested sermons. It is due to Mr. Clopton to remark, that confusion in the method of his discourses did not create obscurity in his style; every separate topic was discussed clearly; and if its connexion with his text was not discernible, it was easy to perceive its bearing on the interests of his hearers.

The want of method in the arrangement of his sermons, rendered his ministry less acceptable to the intelligent, and not more pleasing to the illiterate. He might have arranged his thoughts more carefully, without

diminishing aught from the simplicity of his style, or the familiarity of his illustrations. He might have wielded a mightier influence over the educated, without lessening his usefulness among the uncultivated classes. The young minister may well emulate his diligence, fidelity, and fervour, but should aim at greater perspicuity of arrangement, and greater depth of thought in the composition of his sermons.

Mr. Clopton's *views of scripture doctrine* corresponded in general with those of Dr. Thomas Scott. In the early period of his ministry he was a rigid Calvinist; but as his experience increased, he laid less stress on such doctrinal peculiarities as did not sap the foundation of Christianity. His views concerning the evangelical system underwent little or no change to the close of his life; but he insisted, in his ministry, more on practical and less on speculative points. He did not hesitate to maintain the sovereignty of Divine grace, but did not make it the burden of his ministrations. He did not consider the peculiar tenets of Arminianism unobjectionable, or undeserving refutation,

but as not affecting vitally the interests of evangelic religion. He thought that while errorists were making systematic and vigorous efforts to undermine and subvert the cause of Christ, that good men, of every name, should combine their influence to promote it. For persons denying the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence to produce repentance and faith, he claimed no fellowship, believing them to be no more entitled to the character of Christians than undisguised Deists. I need hardly affirm that he was a decided Baptist. On this point he never wavered; and although he admired and loved many Pedobaptists for their piety and zeal, yet he viewed their practice of inducting infants into that kingdom which "is not of this world," as tending greatly to mar and corrupt it.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

MAN is an imitative being. His character is formed, at least greatly affected, by the examples of those with whom he associates, and of whom he reads. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The Bible abounds in biography: the worst characters are delineated for our warning, and the best for our encouragement. The life of a good man is replete with useful lessons. It is impossible to contemplate his principles, his amiable dispositions, his steady resistance of temptations, his patient endurance of afflictions, his disinterested labours and generous sacrifices for the good of men, and his zeal for the glory of God, without profit. Salutary reflections will be suggested, a desire of imitation will be produced, and a process of assimilation will be commenced. A few general remarks on the life of Mr. Clopton will close our labours.

1. *His life exemplifies the excellence of Christianity.*

It consists not in form and ceremony—not in needless austerities—not in great and dazzling actions—not even in a "form of sound words," but in "faith, hope, charity"—in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—in an entire consecration of the "whole spirit, and soul, and body" to God. Religion, as delineated by the pen of inspiration, in the doctrine and precepts, the promises and threatenings of the Bible, is fair, lovely, and divine. These excellencies are, however, concealed from all but the attentive and discerning. But few, comparatively, among earth's giddy and bustling population, will spare time from their favourite and illusory pursuits, to inspect carefully the heavenly portraiture. But when Christianity is imbodied, becomes as it were incarnate, in the lives of her disciples; when she appears in her native simplicity and grace, free alike from worldly pomp and debasing superstition; enlightened with principles pure, and aims elevated and noble, diffusing around her love, peace, and joy, she will gain the notice and

the esteem of mankind. Vice, ashamed, will hide her head; infidelity, confounded, will stop her mouth. Let any man candidly and seriously trace the life of Mr. Clopton; let him listen to his penitential confession of sins, and mark the tears of godly sorrow which almost daily bedewed his cheeks; let him witness his self-denying and arduous efforts to promote the happiness of men, and the glory of the Lord; let him hear the voice of his importunate supplications, as he communed statedly with his Father in secret; let him contemplate him in all the relations of life, in all the vicissitudes of fortune, in public and private; let him ponder his dying words, "*I still feel, that if God should lock me up in hell, I would attempt to praise him there for his great goodness toward me;*" and then let him say whether the religion which produces such fruits is not supremely excellent, is not divine. Will he not find himself instinctively constrained to exclaim, with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?"

The practice of calling "evil good, and good evil," (Isa. v. 20,) is old, but not forgot-

ten. It may be supposed by some that his exercises and efforts were the products of a feverish enthusiasm. It need not, perhaps, be denied that his religion was slightly tinctured with this infirmity. His ardent, and somewhat gloomy temperament gave complexion to his character, but it combined all the essential elements of moral excellence. If the tree put forth some exuberant branches, its fruits were, nevertheless, abundant and delicious. If he did not do good by the frigid rules of moralists, he *did* it, did it *constantly*, did it *abundantly*. If his life were an effusion of enthusiasm, would that the world were full of it!

2. *He was indebted to the gospel for his eminent attainments in holiness.*

By nature he was, like others, selfish, proud, and alienated from God. He possessed the integrity, the veracity, the generousness, the magnanimity, which gain the ready confidence, esteem, and praise of men, while he was living without "hope and without God in the world." But it was by the gospel that he was awakened from the slumber of death. By this the process of renovation was carried

on: the old man was crucified and destroyed; and the new man was nourished, invigorated, and brought to maturity. To this all his graces may be traced. It was the object of his faith, the foundation of his hope, the source of his joy. It was the food by which he lived, the light by which he walked, the sword with which he conquered. Never was a man more fully prepared than he was, to subscribe to the confession of Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Let it be remembered that the grace which saved him can save any —can save all: that the means by which he attained such eminent holiness is accessible to all, and to all will prove equally efficacious, by diligence and prayer.

3. *A church should highly prize such a pastor as he was.*

We plead for no superstitious veneration of the most pious pastor; no implicit reliance on the opinions of the most gifted. Pastors are but men—fallible and imperfect men. Paul, however, teaches Christians that those who labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, should be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake. The value of

an enlightened, faithful pastor is above all price: it can be estimated only in the light of eternity. His instructions, prayers, and example will promote the present and eternal interests of many. To what numbers did the residence and labours of Mr. Clopton in Charlotte prove a blessing! How strong, and wide, and cheering was his influence on the social and civil, the moral and religious interests of the community. It is pleasing to observe the ardent affection reciprocated between Mr. Clopton and his churches. They loved and honoured him as a father. And well they might. He lived for them. All his energies were directed to the promotion of their welfare. For them he read, and studied, and preached, and watched, and prayed, and wept. It was in his heart not only to live, but if necessary, to die for them. Happy, thrice happy, is the church blessed with such a minister. The members should not only prize him, but assist him by their counsels and prayers, supply his wants, that he may devote himself wholly to the promotion of their spiritual interests, and endeavour to derive instruction from his holy and heart-

searching ministry. We would by no means insinuate that pastors of humbler gifts, and less fervent piety, should be slighted. We should not despise the day of small things. Mr. Clopton attained his eminence by slow degrees. Towards its bishop every church should render, not only the esteem to which his intellectual and moral worth entitle him, but the respect due to the important and responsible office to which it has elevated him.

4. *The death of an efficient pastor, in the vigour of life, is an event adapted to awaken profitable reflections.*

Death does not come by chance. It is under the guidance of infinite wisdom and goodness. When God removes a "candlestick out of its place," we should inquire, "*Is there not a cause?*" Perhaps the light which he shed was not prized, and heeded as it should have been, and God has extinguished it in displeasure. Possibly the gift attracted the love, confidence and veneration to which the Giver alone is entitled, and he resumed it to save his people from the sin of idolatry. It may be that the servant having earned a

glorious reward his Lord was not willing that he should longer be kept from enjoying it. Or, peradventure, God designs to teach his people that he is not dependant on instruments, even the most valuable, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes.

The good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, the useful and the worthless, are alike subject to disease and death. Salutary truth! The best need to be reminded of their mortality. Not unfrequently we behold the proud, the profane, and the dissolute spared, as cumberers of the ground, to old age, and the humble, the pious, and the useful cut down in the vigour of life. A striking illustration this of the psalmist's declaration, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."

The death of a godly and useful minister, while it must remind the churches of the Saviour's command, should dispose their hearts to obey it. "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Perhaps God is removing his faithful servants

to urge his people to the performance of this important, but much neglected duty.

"To the upright there ariseth light in darkness." Our heavenly Father mingles mercies and afflictions. A people bereaved of a beloved pastor, by whose ministry they have been long instructed and comforted, have still unfailing sources of consolation. The preacher is gone, but the truths which he published abide, and they will abide for ever. The labour has terminated, but not its effects. The instrument is removed, but the ever-living, all-pervading and all-accomplishing agent is still present. The stream is dried, but the fountain is unexhausted and inexhaustible. The under shepherd has fallen, but the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, lives, rules, and watches, with infinite compassion, the interests of his numerous flock. Jehovah will never want agents to accomplish his purposes of mercy. If Stephen, "full of faith and power," under the rage of his persecutors, fall asleep, Saul of Tarsus shall be "a chosen vessel" to bear the name of Jesus before "Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

5. *We see in the memoir of Mr. Clopton the power of faith to triumph over death.*

Death is a most solemn event. It is an unequivocal expression of Divine displeasure. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." It is the termination of all our earthly plans and prospects, connexions and enjoyments. It consigns the body to the putrescence of the grave, and ushers the soul into a mysterious, untried, and awful state of being.

We are not astonished that timorous and guilty mortals should shrink and shudder at its approach. Faith only can triumph over this "king of terrors." Infidelity, by hardening the heart into steel-like insensibility, may meet death with reckless indifference. Philosophy may school her disciples into an uncomplaining submission to an event, which, though extremely dark and dreadful, is known to be inevitable. False views of honour may drive a trembling dastard to risk his life for the purpose of concealing his shame, or gratifying a vengeful spirit. But, Christianity, it is thy prerogative to pluck sway the sting of death; to change the monster into an angel of mercy. Thy disciples can meet death with

enlightened views, unshaken confidence, a hope full of immortality, peace, joy, triumph. Faith in the promises of God smiles at the tomb. It was this which enabled Stephen to say, in the agonies of a cruel death, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It was this which gave utterance to the dying words of Paul, the prisoner, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." It was this which imparted to the dying moments of the lamented Clopton, resignation, composure, and joy: this calmed his fears, soothed his sufferings, and raised his thoughts and hopes to heaven. With the most affecting sense of the divine holiness and grandeur, and the most humbling conviction of his own depravity and unworthiness, he still looked up with filial confidence and delight to God. Let any candid man read his dying letter to his father, and say whether infidelity has ever achieved such a triumph.

Reader: We are about to take our leave of you. It has been our aim, by the delineation of an amiable Christian character, not to amuse, but to profit you. The body of the venerated Clopton now sleeps in the silent grave; but his soul is not there. He has departed to be with Christ. High in the climes of light and bliss he lives and walks with God. If the happiness of the saints in heaven be augmented by their labours and sacrifices in the Redeemer's cause on earth, he has entered in no common joy. If they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, he is a star of no usual brilliancy.

Christian Reader: Let us follow him, as he also followed Christ, the Captain of his salvation. Let us emulate his zeal, self-denial, disinterestedness, meekness, constancy, simplicity, and diligence. His unexpected fall should impressively remind us of our own mortality. Soon, very soon, our labours cease. Let us work "while it is day; the night cometh when no man worketh."

To the *unbeliever* we must drop a word. If you were permitted to enjoy the advantages

of Mr. Clopton's ministry, you well remember with what solemnity, earnestness, and power he pressed the truth of God on your conscience. You will hear his inviting, warning voice no more. O, could he return to the field of his earthly labours, with what ardour would he unfold the love of Christ—with what tenderness would he beseech, and with what vehemence would he warn you! But all would be in vain. If you will not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, neither will you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

That we may all imbibe the spirit, copy the example, emulate the usefulness, and, finally, participate in the reward, of our departed brother, is the compiler's sincere prayer. AMEN.

THE END.

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